

# Al-Ahram

Weekly

Mubarak,  
portrait of the  
week by  
George  
Bahgory.....p.10



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## Press victory

HUNDREDS of journalists yesterday celebrated their victory in the year-old struggle to repeal the ill-reputed press law, known as Law 93, at an Extraordinary General Assembly of the Press Syndicate.

Chairman of the Press Syndicate Ibrahim Nafie and members of the Assembly expressed thanks to President Hosni Mubarak for his last minute intervention in support of journalists by issuing a presidential decree cancelling the disputed law.

"Our victory came as an eloquent answer to those who attempted to undermine the leading role of the press," Nafie told the Assembly. "The victory we gained is a victory for the values of freedom, justice and democracy."

Journalists renewed their confidence in Nafie and the syndicate's council by rejecting their collective resignations, presented last week when it seemed as if their battle to secure a compromise with the government over a new press law was lost. Journalists also approved a Code of Ethics to govern the profession, with penalties for those who violate professional values. (see p. 2)

## First contact

US SECRETARY of State Warren Christopher will visit Egypt and Israel next Tuesday and Wednesday. In Cairo he will discuss with President Hosni Mubarak the results of the Arab summit and the peace process after the announcement of the policies of the new Israeli government.

The trip will also produce the first direct contact between a US official and new Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is expected to visit Washington early in July.

The US State Department spokesman said on Tuesday that Christopher would make a longer Middle East tour, which would include Syria, later in the year, possibly in July. The spokesman dodged questions about the apparent contradictions between the announced US policy on Israeli settlements and Netanyahu's vows to continue building them in the West Bank and Syria's Golan Heights.

## Soap bombs

BAHRAIN authorities defused a total of 13 homemade bombs found hidden in packets of soap and placed in supermarkets and shops, official sources said on Tuesday. Bahrain has been hit by a wave of unrest since December 1994 and has accused Iran of working to topple the government by financing a militant Shi'ite group called Hezbollah-Bahrain.

Meanwhile, the State Security Court sentenced eight Bahrainis to between three and 15 years in prison for murdering a policeman. Five others were jailed for sabotage, including torching and damaging school offices south of the capital Manama.

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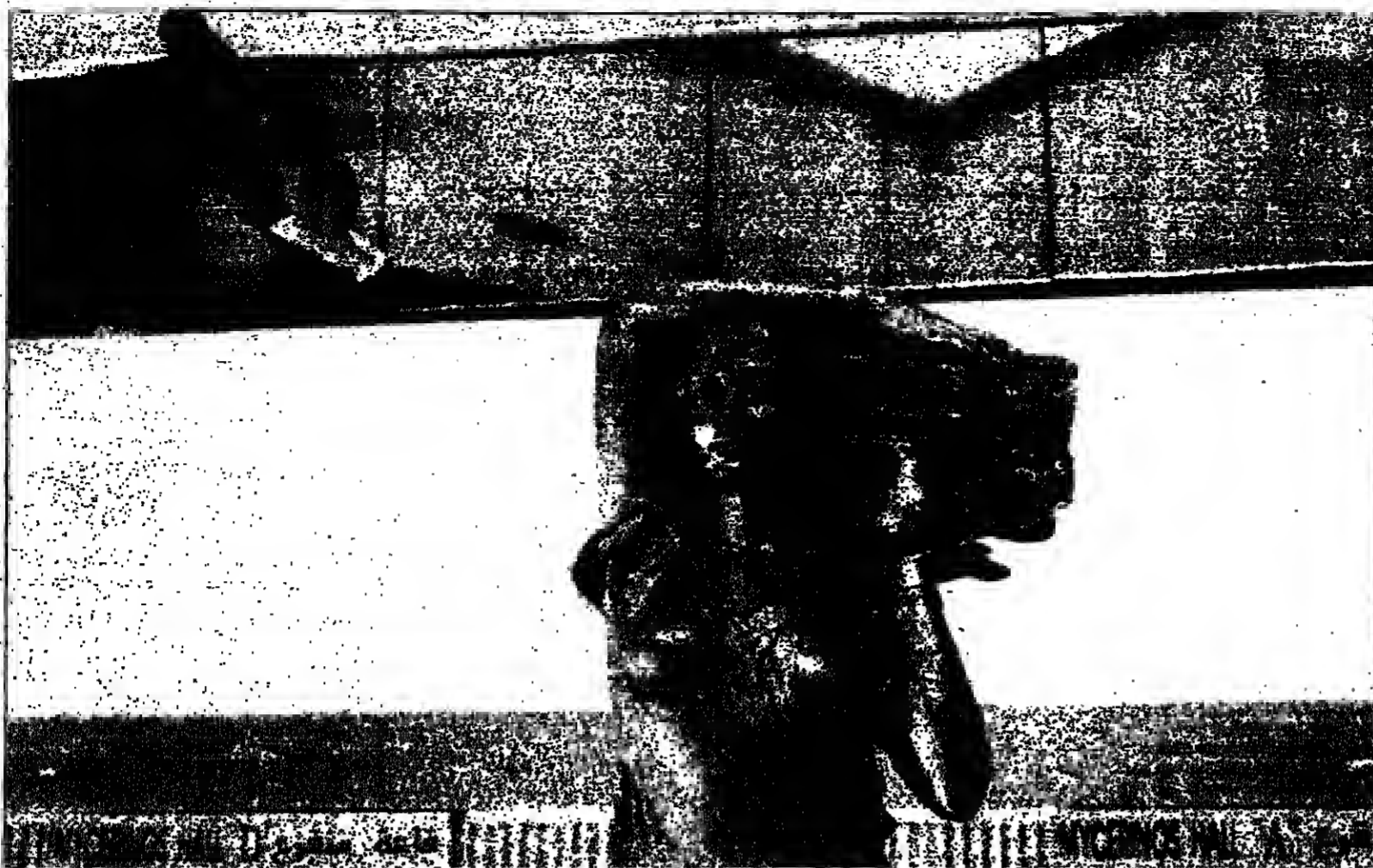


Photo: Randa Shaath

## Scaling the summit

FRESHLY painted kerbs striped black and white. Revamped planting schemes along the medians of Salah Salem. Nearly mown grass, newly planted flowers. Cairo is a city in preparation for a summit. Almost everything is being spruced up.

On Saturday morning, at 11 am, the leaders of more than 20 Arab states will descend on the Mycerinos Hall of the International Conference Centre in Madinet Nasr, participants in the first full-scale Arab summit to be convened since the Gulf War. The summit's inaugural speech will be delivered by President Mubarak in his capacity as head of state of the host country.

The logo for the summit, adapted from that used by the Arab League, is a single olive branch, chosen as a reflection of the aspirations that have inspired the meeting. Discussions will take place, and decisions made, around a vast oval table constructed from some 20 individual pieces. The specially commissioned mobile "round table", designed by Hossam Mustafa, has no head and therefore eliminates potentially thorny questions of protocol while at the same time symbolising the spirit of unity and solidarity that it is hoped will characterise the summit and its proceedings.

A final flurry of activity as last minute preparations continue apace and any potential hitches are carefully ironed out before they have a chance to develop into problems. The logistics and security considerations involved in hosting such an event and ensuring the safety of the various delegations are mind-boggling. The summit's organisers, however, together with the newly outfitted staff at the International Conference Centre, appear undaunted. They remain confident that everything will run smoothly, not least, according to Interior Minister Hassan El-Ali, Cairo's day to day traffic.

# Towards a common agenda

Arab leaders meeting in Cairo for the first time in six years will attempt to revive Arab solidarity. Nevine Khalil reviews their agendas

The long-awaited Arab summit will open in Cairo on Saturday. Twenty presidents, monarchs and top officials will gather for what is hoped to be the turning of a new page in inter-Arab relations, marked over the past six years by deep splits and differences.

Although the summit was announced shortly after the narrow victory of the right-wing Binyamin Netanyahu in the Israeli elections, President Hosni Mubarak has repeatedly affirmed that the summit was not called in reaction to the new government, but rather as a step to meet a long-standing need for Arab coordination.

Iraq, whose invasion of Kuwait in 1990 led to sharp deterioration in inter-Arab relations, was not invited to the summit. But sources close to the meeting said that the issue of reintegrating Iraq will be on the summit agenda. Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo tomorrow morning are expected to finalise a proposed statement to be issued by Arab leaders after their two-day meeting.

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa told reporters that contacts have been underway with different Arab governments to reach a consensus on the summit agenda, which is expected to concentrate on two major points: Arab reconciliation and reaching a common stand on the future of peace negotiations with Israel.

According to Arab sources, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon will seek an Arab strategy to pressure Israel into complying with the land-for-peace formula.

The Palestinians want a clear stand by Arab leaders on

Jerusalem and Palestinian statehood, and it was reported that Arafat will ask the gathered leaders to issue a statement announcing their recognition of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Arafat clearly needs such support, especially after the announcement by Netanyahu in his policy guidelines, presented to the Israeli parliament on Tuesday, that he will not accept an independent Palestinian state, the division of Jerusalem or withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Meanwhile, Syria is reportedly coming to the summit with the strongest proposals in terms of future relations between the Arabs and Israel. Damascus will ask Arab leaders to reinstate the economic boycott of Israel and freeze the normalisation process. Syria will also seek Arab support against Turkey. Relations between the two countries have soured following a military pact between Turkey and Israel and conflict over use of water from the Euphrates River. Before the summit, Ankara warned Arab countries against backing Syria's stance on the sensitive water issue.

According to Syrian sources, Damascus will also put in a good word for Iran during the summit. Such a stand by Syria is likely to upset the Arab Gulf countries who consider Tehran as a major threat to security in the oil-rich region. Besides Iran's occupation of three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, the latest announcement by Bahrain that it has foiled an Iranian plot to overthrow its government has added salt to the wounds.

As for Lebanon, whose negotiations with Israel are strongly linked to developments on the Syrian track, Lebanese President Elias El-Hrawi is expected to call upon Arab leaders to emphasise the demand for Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon. Lebanon believes that if the Arabs come out with a united stand on Israel, Tel Aviv will think twice before attacking its southern territories.

Egypt's agenda is broad and non-specific. President Hosni Mubarak said that the summit aims "to support the peace process with a clear Arab vision which safeguards the Arabs' legitimate rights." It also includes Arab reconciliation and cooperation, relations with non-Arab neighbours like Iran and Turkey, as well as with various regional and international blocs.

Jordan appeared to have no set agenda of its own, with the Jordanian Prime Minister Abdel-Karim Al-Kabarti declaring that Amman looks forward to the summit as a means of establishing a common Arab stand based on mutual trust and a joint strategy. Kabarti denied reports that Jordan wanted to place the issue of terrorism on the summit's agenda.

According to observers, holding the summit after six years of division is in itself quite an accomplishment. However for real progress to be achieved, Arab leaders will have to prove that the summit is not just for show. At this critical juncture, many analysts agree, Arab unity is more necessary than ever, because, as UAE President Sheikh Zayed Al-Nahyan put it, "the absence of an ef-

fective Arab stand is undoubtedly the reason behind the loss of Arab rights."

Iraq's absence at this summit has been criticised by some Arab states like Morocco, which said that a united Arab stand cannot be reached without all countries being present. It is yet unclear whether Morocco will be represented by its head of state, King Hassan II.

There may be last minute efforts, however, to guarantee the highest possible level of representation at the summit. It was reported that an unannounced meeting had taken place in Cairo between the foreign ministers of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia — the three states initiating the summit — to convince more Arab leaders to attend the meeting. Asked by *Al-Ahram Weekly*, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry would not confirm or deny reports of a two-hour meeting. However, sources told AFP that the three ministers had looked at "ways to remedy the absence of several Arab leaders, so that the decisions taken at the meeting will carry greater weight."

The Arab leaders will gather in the Mycerinos Hall at the Cairo International Conference Centre on Saturday, where President Mubarak will give an opening address at around midday. "In the summit's final statement, we want to announce to the world that we are preparing our countries for a new period marked by the end of disunity and the beginning of united Arab ranks," Mubarak said earlier in the week. It is also expected that a mechanism will be instated to follow up Arab action.

## The soul of Sharon

Netanyahu's government was cobbled together this week. It augurs ill for the peace process, writes Graham Usher from Jerusalem

After a swearing-in ceremony replete with high drama — or high farce — on 18 June, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu presented his new government to the 14th Knesset, where it was endorsed by 62 votes to 50.

Taken with the government's policy guidelines published one day before, the new Israeli administration augurs a shift to the right in Israeli domestic policy and, essentially, a rejectionist stance to the terms of the Oslo peace accords.

Matters are likely to be made worse by the fractious nature of Israel's new six-party coalition, a fact made visible by Netanyahu's failure to form a government by the time of the Knesset's opening last Tuesday. Netanyahu is currently not only Israel's prime minister, he is also minister of housing and religious affairs. This amassing of offices is less out of ambition than what has become dubbed in Israel's political circles as the "Sharon problem".

For all his hawkish views — and also because of them — Ariel Sharon is by far the most popular politician in the new Israeli government, commanding support from the ranks of the main Sephardi and religious parties as well as from the grassroots of his own Likud Party. On 17 June, Sharon was told that he would be housing minister. He accepted only to find out that Netanyahu had made a prior deal to split the portfolio between himself and a deputy minister from the orthodox United Torah Judaism bloc. Sharon left Jerusalem in a huff, while Netanyahu decided to freeze his truculent member of the Knesset out of

the government. It didn't work.

Just prior to the announcement of the government on 18 June, Netanyahu's slated foreign minister, David Levy, declared that he would not serve in a cabinet without Sharon. Yet, by nightfall, Levy had been sworn in as foreign minister. This, say sources, was on condition that Sharon would have a post in the cabinet via the creation of a new ministry, National Infrastructure. This would put Sharon at the helm of all energy resources, water and electricity systems, and airport and port construction in Israel. Much more ominously for the Palestinians, it would also give him a free hand over roads, including the construction of settler bypass highways in the West Bank and Gaza. Sharon has yet to accept but, say sources, he is "considering the offer".

The appointment of Sharon to head such a strategic ministry would hardly be good news for Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). But the real fear has been fanned by the coalition's policy guidelines which, if implemented, would bury the peace process on both its Palestinian and Syrian tracks.

While in his opening Knesset address, Netanyahu said that Israel would seek negotiations with Syria and Lebanon "without preconditions", the guidelines flatly contradict this. They state that "Israel will retain sovereignty over the Golan Heights" as "the basis for an arrangement with Syria".

On the Palestinian question, the guidelines, if anything, are even more hardline.

They express opposition to a Palestinian state as well as to the return of Palestinian refugees to the Occupied Territories for fear of the threat this would pose to Israel's "demographic security". Jerusalem will not only stay under Israel's "exclusive sovereignty", actions will be taken to "enhance the social and economic status of the greater Jerusalem area". There is no mention of either the Oslo accords or UN resolutions 242 and 338 — supposedly the bases of the final-status negotiations — nor, tellingly, of settlements, although in his Knesset speech Netanyahu pledged to "encourage settlement" throughout "Israel, Judea and Samaria (i.e. the West Bank), and Gaza".

As for the PNA, Netanyahu promised "good neighbourly relations and cooperation" in return for the PNA preserving its "undertakings on security". The only glimmer of hope was a statement by new Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani that in his opinion Netanyahu "should and would" order the Israeli army's partial redeployment in Hebron.

As Arafat heads for the Arab summit in Cairo on 22-23 June, he will push for Arab solidarity and call on the assembled leaders to "recognise" a Palestinian state "with Jerusalem as its capital". But he must also be pondering the wisdom of gambling all on the Oslo formula. Thus far it has brought neither statehood nor Jerusalem, but an Israeli government whose head may be on the shoulders of Binyamin Netanyahu but whose soul is driven by the colonial ambitions of Ariel Sharon.

## Netanyahu's declaration of war

AS BINYAMIN Netanyahu began his first day in office, Arab countries warned that the uncompromising line of the new Israeli government would impede the peace process.

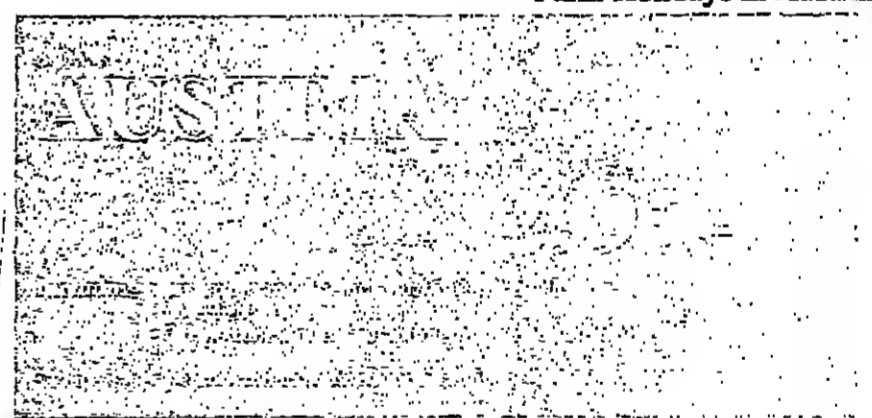
Foreign Minister Amr Moussa was uncharacteristically vitriolic in his reaction and said on Tuesday that Netanyahu's stance would have a negative effect on the peace process. "The statement," he said, "raised more questions than answers and included too many 'nos'. No to the Palestinian state, no to withdrawal from the Syrian heights and no to negotiations over the status of Jerusalem."

Syria rejected Israel's call for unconditional negotiations, and the Syrian government newspaper *Tahrir* said talks would not resume as long as Netanyahu refused the land-for-peace formula. Syrian diplomats called on Arab countries to halt all moves towards normalisation and tighten their economic boycott of Israel.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat urged the countries that co-sponsored the Middle East peace process to ensure that Israel met its commitments under previously signed peace agreements. He told a news conference in Beijing that this was not a bilateral issue "because peace is a regional and international need". And in Jerusalem, Ahmed Korei, a top aide of Arafat, said the policies of the new Israeli government amounted to a declaration of war.

In the first session of the Israeli government held yesterday and attended by senior military officers and top officials of the security services, Netanyahu was quick to stress the greater powers given to him under the new electoral law. The cabinet discussion focused primarily on the creation of a US-style National Security Council giving the prime minister more direct control over defence and security-related issues.

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## Outcry over Zaqaziq precedent

A dispute over supervision of a PhD thesis in a provincial university may be opening the door for discrimination against women in academia. Dina Ezzat reports

A battle between a male graduate student and a professor in the chemistry department at the University of Zaqaziq — in the Nile Delta city of Zaqaziq, may be a time bomb waiting to explode in the careers of hundreds of women academics.

The problem began with an official request submitted by PhD student Mobarak Sherif to his department, demanding that the committee supervising his research and viva "should contain no female element".

A recent court ruling allowed Sherif to begin his research under the supervision of the head of the Chemistry Department, a man, while the State Deputies Commission — a consulting body attached to the Supreme Constitutional Court — reaches a decision on the matter.

The verdict, the court said, had been made out of concern for the student's academic interest. It could be years before the State Deputies' decision is handed down. University rules allow a maximum of five years for a PhD student, who is also a staff member, to complete his research and write his thesis.

"Rejecting our supervision because we are women is completely unacceptable," said Somayah El-Sheikh, one of two women professors who were supposed to co-supervise the proposed thesis, along with another male colleague. "It was not only an insult for us as professors, who should be treated with respect by our junior staff and students, but also as women because it undermined our professional rights (to be treated equally)."

"This request has set a devastating precedent," argued El-Sheikh. "How can I know that tomorrow I won't enter my class to find my male students protesting against being lectured by a woman, or refusing to have women students with them in the same classroom?"

The other woman professor involved was not available for comment.

The request was passed from the head of the Chemistry Department to the dean and the board of the Faculty of Science, and the rector of the university. However it was only the dean-supervised faculty board that approved it. The rector's reverse of the faculty's decision was frozen by the court verdict that temporarily granted the student his wish.

"This discrimination... stands in direct contradiction with the law and constitution, as well as human rights conventions to which Egypt is signatory," criticised an appeal for action put out by a group of women's and human rights organisations.

The groups appealed to all concerned organisations and activists "to join forces against what is a clear act of gender discrimination, as yet unprecedented in the history of Egyptian universities".

But according to Ahmed Bassiouni, the dean of the faculty at the centre of press attention in the two-month dispute, "There is no intention of anti-women discrimination whatsoever". The decision to remove the two women professors from the committee that was to supervise Sherif's PhD, he added, "was based on the fact that the student had serious problems with these two professors and we thought it better for everyone if they didn't have to work together".

Sherif alleges that while supervising his MA, El-Sheikh had abused Sherif's family's good contacts and demanded "big favours".

"Then the demands became too much for us to meet and I decided I did not want to do my PhD with her or the other woman professor, who is a good friend of hers," Sherif said.

While admitting that his letter was worded in discriminatory tones, Sherif insisted, "It was not my intention to say 'no women' at all. That was just my way of referring to these two women professors without naming names". His reason for referring to the women indirectly, he said, was "out of fear that they would end up on the supervising committee, in which case I would not be in a favourable situation".

He added: "I swear I would not have minded any other woman professor." Nevertheless, the alternative names suggested by Sherif to supervise his thesis are exclusively male. "That was because these professors were the types working in the area that I wanted to work on for my degree. It had nothing to do with them being men," countered Sherif.

El-Sheikh categorically rejects allegations of abuse of power on her side. She insists that Sherif was motivated by his "reactionary" ideas, and said she would do everything she could to reverse this decision. "I know this guy. I worked with him before and he has reactionary attitudes towards women," she said.

According to Hala Shukrallah, member of the New Woman Research Centre, "Regardless of the fine details and the inter-departmental problems, this case sets a serious precedent because it offers a rule that could be used in other places of work. It is actually a shift in the norms of society".

The Zaqaziq University case has caused a public outcry. Responding to a widespread press coverage, Minister of Education Hussein Kamel Bahaeddin declared that his ministry would not allow or tolerate discrimination against women.

Discrimination against women in the workplace and on the labour market is not limited to this incident. Many working women complain of marginalisation in favour of their male counterparts, and many companies, government-owned ones included, restrict the right of application for certain jobs to male contenders.

The constitution clearly stipulates full equality for all citizens regardless of their gender. Egypt is a signatory of a number of international treaties that reject all forms of discrimination against women. But, complain women's groups, they are often not properly enforced.



President and Mrs Mubarak and Prime Minister El-Ganzouri (centre) listen to El-Sherif's presentation

It was a week of victory celebrations for journalists. After a year-long struggle, and last-minute intervention by President Mubarak, the "infamous" Law 93 was scrapped and Egypt has a new press law. Mona El-Nahhas reports from the Press Syndicate, and Gamal Essam El-Din from parliament

## Light at tunnel's end

President's Hosni Mubarak's intervention at the 11th hour last week resolved a year-long stand-off between journalists and the government over press freedoms. A Presidential decree issued last Thursday abolished Law 93 and paved the way for the drafting of a freer press law.

In a meeting on Saturday with the Press Syndicate's council and leading journalists, led by Chairman Ibrahim Nafie, Mubarak underlined that "freedom of the press is basic and no official can challenge it".

However, the president cautioned journalists that they must "respect society's values and not attack the private lives of individuals or the prestige of state institutions".

Journalists agreed that without the intervention of president Mubarak, the People's Assembly would have followed the same course as the Shura Council, and passed a press law which ignores journalists' demands.

Last Sunday, the People's Assembly approved by consensus the Presidential decree Mubarak had referred to it three days before.

A one-year dispute between the Press Syndicate and the government was laid to rest this week as the People's Assembly finally passed two new laws, one approving a presidential decree abolishing Law 93, which by stiffening penalties for publication offences triggered the dispute, the other to enact a new press law.

"In this historic session, we can all be proud that one cloud has vanished," Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri told the People's Assembly. "When this cloud first appeared, the first and final demand of the Press Syndicate to the president was the cancellation of preventive custody for journalists under investigation for publication offences," said El-Ganzouri.

Last week, after almost one year of negotiations between the Press Syndicate and the government, things were looking grim for journalists. A new law, ignoring most of their demands, was about to be enacted. But following an appeal to President Mubarak from the Press Syndicate, the president last Thursday issued a decree cancelling Law 93 and re-enacting legislation under the 1937 Penal Code on publication offences. The decree was approved by the Assembly's Legislative and Constitutional Committee on Saturday morning, debated by the full Assembly on Saturday evening, and finally passed on Sunday morning.

The Assembly adopted only one change to the 1937 statute raising the maximum fine for publication offences from LE5,000 to LE20,000. Kamal El-Shazli, minister of state for parliamentary affairs, said the rise in fines was necessary to keep pace with inflation.

However, this did not go down well with Ali Fath El-Bab, an MP for the Islamist-oriented Labour Party, who abstained from voting on the law, because, he said, the penalties were beyond the financial capacity of most journalists.

Also on Sunday, the Assembly began debating the new draft press law. The draft had been formulated by a joint committee of journalists and legal experts, set up on the instructions of President Mubarak following journalist protests at Law 93. The draft, together with amendments suggested by the journalists, was submitted for discussion before the Shura Council, which passed the draft without including any of the journalists' amendments.

Deeply frustrated by the ferocity of the Shura Council's opposition to their demands, and expecting an action replay when the draft reached the People's Assembly, journalists appealed to President Mubarak to act as a final arbiter.

Aware of Mubarak's presidential decree and his, and the prime minister's, meetings with the journalists, members of the

previous week's atmosphere of despondency. The draft press law then under debate in the Shura Council and the Media and Culture Committee of the People's Assembly had ignored the journalists' demand for the abolition of Law 93, which had introduced preventive detention of journalists being investigated for publication offences, stiffened penalties for such offences and made terms of imprisonment mandatory in most of them.

Members of both the Shura Council and the assembly's Media and Culture Committee were totally unresponsive to the amendments suggested by journalist members as well as the Press Syndicate with the aim of making the new law more responsive to their demands and press freedom. In their 8th Extraordinary General Assembly in a little over 12 months, on Wednesday

12 June, journalists were in an uproar. All 12 members of the syndicate council had submitted their collective resignation earlier that week. Syndicate Chairman, Ibrahim Nafie, in his opening remarks to the assembly, announced his own resignation. The assembly, however, decided to postpone any decision on the resignations until their next session, held yesterday.

A hint of what was in store came near the end of the 12 June assembly, when Nafie revealed that he had met with Mubarak on the previous evening, and that the president had promised to intervene.

Salah Eissa, a former member of the council and one of the leading figures of the year-long battle, seems to be satisfied with the final outcome. However, he noted that journalists should continue their efforts until all

their demands are realised. "Such demands include the abolition of the prison sentences and all the penalties undermining freedom in case of publication offences, the unlimited access to information, and the inherent right to publish newspapers," Eissa said.

Under Law 93, authorities have interrogated, charged or sentenced around 100 journalists. Magdi Hussein, chief editor of the Islamist-oriented *Al-Shaab*, was the only journalist to receive a final sentence when a Court of Appeals confirmed last May his one-year suspended sentence and a LE15,000 fine.

Hussein was convicted of slandering the son of Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi. Refusing to pay the fine, on the grounds that the abolition of Law 93 nullified his case, Hussein was detained by police on Tuesday morning. However, a few hours later, the attorney-general of the Central Cairo Prosecution Department decided to release Hussein, on condition that he pay the fine in instalments over the next nine months.

dering public officials or parliamentary deputies. In fact, the deletion of these articles was automatic, since they had been part of Law 93, which was repealed earlier by the Assembly on Sunday.

On Tuesday morning, the Assembly discussed the remaining 20 articles, without introducing any amendments. In the final vote, 14 deputies — three Wafdists, five Tagammu deputies, one Liberal Party deputy, and five independents — abstained. None voted against.

Speaking for the Wafdists, Yassin Scraggedin said the new law had not taken into account the Wafd's request for the abolition of the Higher Press Council, and still contained some stiff penalties. Tagammu member Rifaat Sayed also believed the new law did not go far enough, because it retained some measures which opposed press freedom, such as licensing procedures on licensing new newspapers, retaining imprisonment for publication offences (in the case of Article 179), and allowing the police to search journalists' homes without the presence of a public prosecutor. The Liberal Party's Ragab Hemida and independent Mohamed Marzouq, agreed. The law, they maintained, still contained harsh penalties. This, said Marzouq, would result in corruption in a vital period of the nation's history.

This gave 20 more deputies the opportunity to speak on the law in principle. But when Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif and Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri joined the session, the Assembly immediately got down to business: a full debate of the articles of the new draft.

Ten articles were discussed in the morning session, while in the evening session, which continued past midnight, the Assembly passed 53 articles. The most significant aspect of the session was the deletion of articles 45 and 46 of the new draft, which imposed penalties ranging from one year in prison or fines ranging from LE5,000 to LE15,000 for some publication offences, such as slandering public officials or parliamentary deputies. In fact, the deletion of these articles was automatic, since they had been part of Law 93, which was repealed earlier by the Assembly on Sunday.

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Speaking for the Wafdists, Yassin Scraggedin said the new law had not taken into account the Wafd's request for the abolition of the Higher Press Council, and still contained some stiff penalties. Tagammu member Rifaat Sayed also believed the new law did not go far enough, because it retained some measures which opposed press freedom, such as licensing procedures on licensing new newspapers, retaining imprisonment for publication offences (in the case of Article 179), and allowing the police to search journalists' homes without the presence of a public prosecutor. The Liberal Party's Ragab Hemida and independent Mohamed Marzouq, agreed. The law, they maintained, still contained harsh penalties. This, said Marzouq, would result in corruption in a vital period of the nation's history.

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## Media Day in Media City

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak, joined by Mrs Suzanne Mubarak and a number of prominent writers, journalists and artists, celebrated Media Day on Sunday with a 3-hour tour of Media City, acclaimed as Egypt's answer to America's Universal Studios. Nevine Khalil took part in the celebrations.

Located at the 6th of October City, some 40km northwest of Cairo, the vast compound is still under construction. Mubarak inaugurated "phase 2" of the project, which includes an Islamic city, a Pharaonic city, a forest area, a Bedouin village, an underwater filming area and a 1,500-seat theatre house. Mubarak also gave the starting signal for Channel 8 which broadcasts from the Upper Egyptian city of Aswan.

Media City was initially estimated to cost \$1 billion. The state-of-the-art 14-studio complex has yet to be built, and within weeks a decision will be taken on which group of companies will be given the task. The gathered guests listened to a detailed description of the city's facilities given by Minister of Information Safwat El-Sherif.

During the tour, President and Mrs Mubarak were treated to a number of performances of Pharaonic dancing, water ballet and excerpts from Sayed Darwish's *Shakhsa* opera. Top officials accompanying the president included People's Assembly Speaker Fathi Sorour, Shura Council Speaker Mustafa Kamel Helmi and Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri and a number of government ministers.

Also in attendance was a swarm of Egypt's top journalists, headed by their syndicate chairman, Ibrahim Nafie, writers, actors, directors and media people.



Journalists gather around Nafie in a victorious general assembly yesterday photo: Mohamed Wassim

of the Assembly's Media and Culture Committee, said the new law was a necessary step to keep abreast of new social and political developments.

However, opposition deputies were more critical. Ayman Nour, a Wafdist journalist, contended that the draft was a patch-up job rather than the result of integrated study. "I object to this law because it comes short of our [journalists'] ambitions," said Nour.

Mohamed El-Dohini, speaking for the leftist Tagammu Party, also objected to the law in principle. The law, he said, still included severe penalties for publication offences, citing the retention of preventive detention of journalists under Article 179. Ragab Hemida,

speaking for the Liberal Party, said the new law fell short of the journalists' demands, for example maintaining the right of the police to search the homes of journalists in connection with publication offences.

Similar opinions were voiced by Samah Ashour of the Nasserist Party, and Ali Fath El-Bab of the Labour Party. While Ashour criticised the law for giving the Shura Council and the Higher Press Council the upper hand in controlling the press, Fath El-Bab said the law did not impose penalties on state officials who give journalists false information or who refuse to give information.

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# Succession feud leaves Wafd torn

A senior member of the Wafd Party has warned of an imminent split after last week's election for the Wafd's Supreme Authority. **Omayma Abdel-Latif** reports

Ending weeks of speculation about the party's future, following newspaper reports of an open row between the party's chairman and his brother, the General Assembly of the liberal Wafd Party has elected a Wafdist Authority — the new title for the Supreme Authority — the party's highest body, responsible for major policy decisions. However, insiders maintain that the power struggle within the party is far from over.

The struggle centres over the succession to the party leadership. Party leader Fouad Serageldin is now over 80. His younger brother, Yassin Serageldin, is his natural successor, but he faces a challenge from deputy chairman No'man Gomaa, backed by a powerful bloc of supporters, known as the Paris Group.

The General Assembly was attended by 860 delegates from 25 governorates. Last Friday, the assembly elected 40 authority members from among 80 candidates. It also approved amendments to the party's internal statutes, allowing party chairman Fouad Serageldin to select another 20 — instead of 10 — members of the Wafdist Authority.

Last week's assembly was dominated by fighting and dissent over appointments to leadership posts. Disagreement often developed into verbal battles, and conflict erupted into the open between supporters of Gomaa and Yassin Serageldin, with leaflets being distributed urging delegates to vote for the Paris Group. The Gomaa



Fouad Serageldin

Yassin Serageldin

No'man Gomaa

Ayman Nour

faction also obstructed Ahmed El-Khawaga, the head of the Bar Association and an opponent of Gomaa, in paying his membership dues to prevent him from nominating himself for membership of the Wafdist Authority. Adding to the furor, some lawyers, including party member Adly El-Mouled, are charging legal action against the party, claiming that the elections were rigged and that the results should be declared null and void.

According to observers, the Gomaa camp succeeded in getting many of their members elected to the party's ruling body, gaining a tight grip over the party and placing Gomaa at the top of the list of candidates to succeed the ailing Serageldin.

Though Gomaa was not available for comment, a source close to him said the results have reinforced his position "and even made him a strong candidate for the

party's number one post."

A top party member described the results as "disappointing especially to the young groups in the party."

"The results will allow the few ageing faces who have been controlling the party since its inception to tighten their hold on the party's affairs and its top posts," commented the source, who asked that his name be withheld.

Ayman Nour, leader of a group of anti-Gomaa Wafdistas, said the elections showed that Gomaa had succeeded in ousting Yassin Serageldin and his supporters from the party's top positions.

Nour warned of the imminent emergence of a breakaway movement under his leadership "who cannot operate under the false democracy of Gomaa," and added that there would be further rifts within the mainstream party.

Nour said that Yassin Serageldin him-

self had declined to attend Friday's General Assembly to protest against the Paris Group's domination of party affairs.

But Fouad Serageldin, the party chairman, speaking to *Al-Ahram Weekly* two days after the election, denied reports of a "civil war" between the Wafd's leadership, particularly his younger brother Yassin and Gomaa. Rumours of a power struggle had persisted for years, he said, and had their origin in speculations about who would succeed him upon his death.

There were, added the octogenarian Serageldin, "leaders and cadres within the Wafd capable of continuing our march without exposing the party to division."

"The post-Fouad Serageldin Wafd will be strong and united," insisted Serageldin, who forecast that he might not live to chair the next General Assembly.

However, in the midst of rumours of furious rows between Fouad and Yassin Ser-

ageldin — because the chairman favours Gomaa over his younger brother — reports are also circulating within the Wafd that Serageldin has been working to heal a rift between Yassin and Gomaa.

The younger Serageldin himself brushed aside reports of competition between him and Gomaa, and declined to comment on rumours that Gomaa had been named as his brother's successor.

"These are groundless rumours... The leadership will be decided at the next General Assembly," he told the *Weekly*. Yassin Serageldin refused to acknowledge that recent events were symptomatic of a power struggle. A plurality of views was natural and part and parcel of democracy, he said.

Saad Fakhray Abdel-Nour, one of the two newly-elected Coptic Wafdist Authority members, said that the election of two out of four Coptic candidates was a reasonable result.

He expects changes in the party with the emergence of new, younger figures. "The party will witness change because many of the younger groups are represented for the first time in the Wafdist leadership," he told the *Weekly*.

Another member predicted that major changes in the Wafd's policies were unlikely. If Gomaa were to be elected chairman, the party would be likely to focus more on "business deals," but its relationship with other political parties would remain unchanged.

## Doctors Syndicate sues judicial committee

THE MUSLIM Brotherhood-dominated Doctors Syndicate is currently locked in battle with the judicial committee responsible for supervising syndicate elections, reports Mariz Tawadros. The term of office of the syndicate's outgoing council expired on 13 April, and a date for new elections has yet to be set. The syndicate is accusing the committee of procrastination and is currently preparing an appeal to the Administrative Judicial Court. Some syndicate members charge the committee of delaying the elections to enable it to manipulate the results. The committee, meanwhile, argues that the syndicate has not fulfilled its legal obligations.

Omair Shahnin, professor of psychiatry and deputy chairman of the syndicate told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the proposed appeal was an expression of the syndicate's dissatisfaction with the committee's behaviour. "It is also a way for us to pressure the committee to set a date once and for all for the elections, which are long overdue," he said.

Shahnin maintained that the committee's argument that the syndicate has not fulfilled all its obligations under Law 100, which deals with syndicate administration, was unfounded. "We have presented the committee with an accurate voters' list. We have indicated all the changes to previous lists and have passed the information on to the committee," he stated. Shahnin said that other requirements, some of which he described as petty, had also been met.

The syndicate has sent over 50 appeals to the committee's head, asking him to speed up the process of setting an election date. Shahnin maintained that the delay was detrimental to the syndicate's well-being, because without an elected council it was unable to speak as the legitimate voice of its members. "We just want to hold our elections effectively in the shortest possible time," he insisted.

However, a spokesman for the judicial committee insisted that the syndicate had failed to fulfil its legal obligations. "The judicial committee rules according to the prescribed laws and precepts as defined in Law 100, not according to any other means of assessment," emphasised the spokesman. He asserted that the voters' lists had not been updated since the last syndicate elections two years ago, and claimed that the syndicate itself had conceded that the lists were incomplete.

"We have asked the syndicate to form a special committee to come to court and verify their proposed voters lists with us just in case there are any discrepancies. This is what they should be doing now," he said.

Full names, the spokesman added, were required to make it more difficult to tamper with the voting process. "If you only use two names it makes fraud very easy, because members can vote over and over again." He asserted that no date could be set for the election until voters' lists had been handed in and revised, even if the syndicate proceeded with its court action.

## Constitution versus the law

A study in Egypt's legislative system by the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA), a non-governmental organisation, concludes that dozens of laws are in violation of the constitution.

The report claims the Egyptian legislative structure has become corrupted, and calls for lending the Supreme Constitutional Court more powers to put an end to what the report describes as the phenomenon of unconstitutional laws. Officials at the legislative institutions, however, assert that the report exaggerates the problems, while accepting that mistakes do sometimes occur.

According to CHRLA statistics, the Supreme Constitutional Court has ruled a total of 60 laws unconstitutional. The constitutionality of many more laws is currently being contested before the court.

Rulings by the Supreme Constitutional Court, the report said, revealed that such unconstitutional laws violated nearly 25 per cent of the provisions of the 1971 constitution, as well as violating human rights and civil liberties. These include the right of every citizen to be tried before his "natural" judge, and the right to form societies and political parties.

The study blames the gap between the law and the constitution on those who took charge of the legislative authority since the issue of the 1971 constitution. "Legislators, during Sadat's era in particular, bear the responsibility for nearly 63 per cent of unconstitutional laws."

As the body responsible for ruling on the constitutionality of legislation, the study recommends reform to the Supreme Constitutional Court itself, and its position within the legal system.

Commenting on the report of a human rights group, the chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court asserted the court's independence, but admitted that litigants should have more direct access to the court. He spoke to **Mona El-Nahhas**

The report calls for the removal of obstacles delaying the abolition of unconstitutional laws. "For example, individuals and bodies should be entitled to contest the constitutionality of laws before the court directly, without the intervention of the Council of Ministers, and without waiting until the law in dispute is applied."

In addition, the report argues that the structure of the court leaves it without the necessary guarantees to ensure its complete impartiality. The executive authority, represented by the president of the republic, appoints the court's chief justice. Members of the court are appointed by means of a presidential decree after consulting the Supreme Council of Judicial Authorities.

However, Counsellor Awad El-Morri, chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court, maintained in comments made to *Al-Ahram Weekly* that in practice, the president did not intervene in appointments. "The chief justice of the court and its general assembly jointly take the decision concerning the court's future members," he explained. "Names of the nominees are ratified by the Supreme Council of Judicial Bodies before being referred to the president of the republic."

The president just signs the decree of nomination without introducing any changes to the court's will."

"The court's chief justice," El-Morri argued, "should be appointed by the president," because he has executive responsibilities. He is empowered under the constitution to temporarily step in as president of the republic in the event of a vacancy, and the absence of the speaker of the People's Assembly. "Through appointing the court's chief justice, the president guarantees that in an emergency, the person taking control would be trustworthy and capable of carrying out the responsibility attached to his post properly."

El-Morri admitted, however, that there had been several attempts to diminish the role of the constitutional court, but asserted: "All these attempts have failed and they will never succeed."

El-Morri is in favour of allowing litigants to bypass the Court of Merits when seeking to challenge the constitutionality of a law. Such a move would, he believes, speed up the process of repealing unconstitutional laws. "However, it would overload the Constitutional Court, because the number of lawsuits would be doubled," he noted.

Chief Justice El-Morri

On the question of the effect of an overwhelming National Democratic (NDP) majority on the independence of legislators, Counsellor Mohamed Moussa, chairman of the People's Assembly's Legislative Committee denied that MPs were affected. "NDP deputies do not necessarily take the government's side... Our first concern is that a law is consistent with the constitution. Unconstitutional laws are a result of human error, and it is the Constitutional Court's responsibility to abolish them," he told the *Weekly*. According to Moussa, the number of unconstitutional laws mentioned in the report did not constitute a phenomenon when placed in the context of the hundreds of laws passed during this period.

"Members of the parliament, regardless of their political orientation, enjoy complete independence and immunity, which allows them to express their views freely," agreed Fawzya Abdel-Sattar, former chairwoman of the People's Assembly's Legislative Committee. There were some rare cases, she conceded, of MPs who did not give priority to the public interest, "but this should not be taken as a general rule."

Draft laws, she added, were fully discussed in the People's Assembly's Legislative Committee before being debated by the whole house. "Some draft laws need to be passed quickly," she said. "In these cases particularly, legislators may make a mistake and pass something unconstitutional. This is quite natural. After all legislators are human beings."

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

## Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

Scholars generally cite December 1899 as the birth of the Egyptian labour movement. It was on this date that Egypt's cigarette rollers launched a successful strike that was only resolved two months later, in February 1900.

However, this dating is simplistic, if not inaccurate. The strike was preceded by a five-year campaign that has yet to receive its due share of academic research, and it was three years before the strike that Egypt's first labour federation was created. It was this federation that prepared the ground for the strike.

More importantly, studies on the inception of the Egyptian labour movement tend to lack an exploration of the passions that generally accompany such major historical events. It is precisely this vital portrayal of the human factor that *Al-Ahram* has so much to contribute to, in its detailed chronicles of the rise of the Egyptian labour movement.

The first stirrings of the Egyptian labour movement took place simultaneously in Port Said and Cairo. In Port Said the strikers began, out with the cigarette rollers, but among the armies of workers employed by the Suez Canal Company, *Al-Ahram* records their first manifestations — the coal workers' and crane workers' strikes in 1894.

The crane workers' strike took place three months after the coal workers' strike. On 23 August, *Al-Ahram's* correspondent in Port Said reports, "The crane workers have gone on strike today and lodged their complaints against their employers with the governor. They are frequently forced to work on Sundays without extra pay. Nor do they receive compensation for those days when they are laid off because the sea is too stormy for them to work."

After reading the workers' complaints, the governor announced that he suspected that they were motivated by "racism and malice" and advised them to report back to work. The following day, infuriated by the response, the workers rushed to the wharves on which the cranes were mounted and tried to push them into the canal in an act of vengeance against the company. Their action brought in the military who "pursued the strikers until they were able to disperse them and drive them back to their quarters."

In Cairo, labour unrest began in the cigarette industry, one of Egypt's major local industries at the time. In Cairo alone, there were five cigarette manufacturing plants: Gianacelis, Khamis, Melakino, Dimitrinio and Favades. There were several companies in Alexandria too and as the names suggest, most, if not all, were owned by Greeks.

That the cigarette industry should flourish in Egypt is due to a centuries-old custom of tobacco smoking. As Chabrol

writes in the *Description d'Egypte*, "It is possible for us to say that the majority of the Egyptian people spend their time smoking. While the rich prefer tobacco from Lesitaya, the poor smoke local tobacco which lacks the same exquisite flavour." Nor was cigarette smoking a product of contact with the West: Egyptians simply substituted cigarettes for the *nargila* (water-pipe).

On 18 June 1894 the labour leaders of some 4,500 workers submitted a petition containing a lengthy list of complaints. Heading the list was a recent reduction in wages. "The individual worker used to receive between 10 and 12 francs a day and now it is no more than 15 piastres." Previously the employers had pledged not to reduce workers' salaries to less than 26 piastres a day. "Nevertheless they broke this promise, in spite of the fact that sales have increased considerably over the last year."

Two days later a strike was declared. Fights broke out between the strikers and those who insisted on going to work. The police, brought in to quell the unrest, arrested one of the strikers, whose enraged comrades rallied to his defence and attacked the police.

Employees in the cigarette factories were a mixture of Greeks, Syrians, Lebanese and Egyptians. Evidently, the leaders were Greeks, however, because *Al-Ahram* reports that one of the government's first reactions was to consult the Greek consulate. It was agreed that "if the striking workers do not renounce their strike, their leaders will be expelled from Egypt." That the Greek consul should sanction this decision, even though Greek expatriates in Egypt enjoyed immunity under the capitulations system, can be attributed to the fact that the factory owners themselves were also Greeks.

In spite of the ultimatum, the strike continued for another month and a half, during which activity oscillated between skirmishes between sea workers and police and negotiations with employers. On 7 July the strikers rallied in front of the Melakino factory and "entered into a brawl with the workers that the factory owners had brought in from Alexandria. They were dispersed by the police although they vowed that they would return."

*Al-Ahram* sharply criticised the use of force against the workers, "who generally constitute the weaker party that is aggrieved and most deserving of support." It then called upon the factory owners to "be more lenient with the cigarette rollers and to at least meet their minimum demands".

Negotiations were initiated four days later when the governor of Cairo and the Greek consul interceded with the factory owners in order to convince them to raise the workers' wages from 22 to 26 piastres, a solution that was acceptable to

**1 3 4** The first stirrings of the Egyptian labour movement took place in 1894 with the coal and crane workers' strikes. In this instalment of his chronicle of modern Egyptian history as seen through the pages of *Al-Ahram*, **Dr Yunan Labib Rizq** traces the struggle of Egypt's cigarette rollers against Greek factory owners

the workers.

Over the next two years, the nascent Egyptian labour movement began to gain ground. Most studies subscribe to the opinion of Vallet, author of *Contribution à l'étude de la condition des ouvriers*, who held that the Cigarette Rollers' Union was born out of the strike of 1899-1900. *Al-Ahram* does us the service of correcting this misconception. The watered year was three years earlier. On 7 July 1896 it reports, "We have learned that, on the fifth of this month, the cigarette rollers in the capital formed a labour association called the Eastern Economic Society of Egypt."

The newspaper goes on to report that the society had already enlisted 70 members from among whom it elected a five-man committee to formulate the society's charter. A month and a half later, on 22 August, *Al-Ahram* officials received a booklet entitled *The Code of the Eastern Economic Society of Cigarette Workers* which specified the aims of the organisation, the rules and conditions for joining and the rights and obligations of its members.

Over the following three years, up to the famous strike, the organisation continued to develop and expand. The membership of the United Federation of Cigarette Rollers, as it soon came to be called, rose to more than a thousand. The subscription fees, the few piastres contributed by each member every month, were pooled to create a fund "to aid those overcome by illness, injury or other misfortunes." It also appointed two representatives for each factory. It was their responsibility to collect the union fees and arrange for assistance to needy workers. Ultimately this union would play a prominent role in organising the strike of 1899.

In December 1899 we read the first reports of the strike. The workers of the Favades factory declared a strike. Their motives were very compelling. It had been the factory's policy to demand each worker to roll a thousand cigarettes a day. However, it had recently introduced a new product — a "large cigarette" — of which workers could barely manage to roll 600 a day. Workers were therefore earning only a fraction of their wages. The owner of the factory rejected the fed-

eration's bid to negotiate.

Shortly afterwards the workers of the Karyazi company submitted similar demands. Karyazi convinced one of the workers to write to a Greek-language newspaper published in Cairo attesting that the employees of the factory had no cause for grievance. The letter incited the wrath of his co-workers who "insisted he be dismissed and when the owner refused they walked out en masse and went on strike."

By the turn of the century the strike was in full swing. Over 1,500 workers refused to report to work, leading to the closure of Cairo's five major cigarette factories. The factory owners' mistrust of the union was one of the major factors behind the intensification of the strike. Indeed to counter the union, the cigarette magnates formed their own association, the Union of Egyptian Tobacco Factories. Selecting Nestor Gianacelis as its president, it held its first meeting on 31 December 1898 to adopt a number of resolutions.

The union expressed its conviction that the Federation of Cigarette Rollers had departed from the humanitarian aims of its charter by not granting the worker the freedom to choose whether to work or not, and "making him a captive of the federation's central committee". It also stated that the labour federation had formed a monitoring committee which it accused of barring non-members from working in the factories.

The tract of the Union of Egyptian Tobacco Factories concluded, "We reserve for ourselves the complete liberty to employ any worker who agrees to our terms and to dismiss any worker who does not fulfil his obligations in accordance with the regulations of the company."

The organisation then issued an ultimatum to Aliak Apostolito, the president of the United Federation of Cigarette Rollers: "If you do not call off the workers' strike in the factories of the Karyazi Brothers Co. within eight days as of the date of this notification, we will be regretfully forced to close down operations in all our factories and to dismiss all workers who are members of the above mentioned federation."

The strikers had little difficulty in interpreting the ultimatum. The ultimatum was an attempt to outmanoeuvre the leaders of the strike, containing as well a threat to import some labour from the company's other factories in Port Said and Alexandria. They resolved to prolong the strike.

On 9 January the tobacco magnates proved as good as their word. "Seven factories have been shut down and their workers dismissed," reports *Al-Ahram*. "There are no less than 1000 workers on strike. We had anticipated such a crisis between the workers and merchants."

With nowhere else to turn, the strikers vented their grievances in the country's newspapers. One major complaint was directed at the company foremen, who "would exact bribes amounting to 10 to 20 piastres a week from the workers in addition to gifts and sweets during holidays". The foremen would also force the workers to take part in the lotteries in which "watches and rings are raffled off in order to raise money for others. Every worker has to donate what the foreman tells him to. If a worker dared to complain to the owner, the foreman would find a thousand pretexts to fire him." The workers also complained that "the costs of the cloth that covers the tobacco, the glue for the cigarette paper and the salaries of the cooks and teamsters are also taken from our wages".

It took two months to resolve the situation. On 20 January, 1,500 workers of Greek, Egyptian, Syrian, Coptic, Armenian and Jewish origin, supporting approximately 3,000 women and children, and who are all young men who are dedicated to work and who loathe unemployment, staged a rally.

Believing they could take advantage of this incipient gloom, the factory owners reopened their factories in the hope that workers could be enticed back to work. However, the ploy met with failure. As a spokesman for the strikers announced to *Al-Ahram*, the workers would not return to work until all their conditions were met. These were that monitors would be permitted to be stationed in the work site in order to inhibit bribery, that the factory owner submit a request to the federation for the exact quota of workers he needs so as to prevent tampering with the wages, and that the owner be prohibited from hiring an employee other than for compelling reasons. "We must protect the rights of every individual worker so that tomorrow the merchants do not svenge themselves on the workers on the pretext that they had incited or participated in the strike."

When one factory owner, Melakino, tried to bring in workers from Port Said, his ploy backfired. "Having found themselves locked inside the factory like prisoners, the workers smuggled a message to

the Federation of Cigarette Rollers saying that they were of the same conviction as their comrades but that they were being coerced to work. The federation presented the letter to the governor who ordered the captive workers released."

It was not long before the solidarity of the owners began to erode. The first to signal a breaking of ranks was Matsianos who suggested that they comply with some of the workers' demands. Favades, on the other hand, advocated a stauncher line. When workers staged a rally outside his factory, he called in the police to disperse them. Ten days later, the workers staged another protest rally outside his factory. "There was much din and commotion. Matsianos, the deputy police commissioner, arrived with a corps of police in order to disperse the demonstrators. The sight of the police caused the workers to become agitated and when Matsianos's assistant beat them, fighting broke out. In the ensuing mêlée, 15 people were arrested and taken into detention and the remainder dispersed."

It was not until two weeks later, on 21 February, that the parties reached a settlement. The most important provisions stipulated in the agreement, which was published in full in *Al-Ahram*, were "to set a minimum wage, to permit workers to smoke on site, to allow them to choose the food and drink they desired, to exempt them from all compulsory payments and to dismiss those who accept or pay bribes". As for the factory owners, they had the right to "dismiss any worker who is absent for three consecutive days without leave or without a legitimate excuse, to dismiss workers who violate the codes of conduct, and to suspend workers for one day if they ruin the tobacco or if the cigarettes they roll are not up to standard". Finally, the agreement regulated the relationship between the merchants and the United Federation of Cigarette Rollers. Workers with seniority would have the right to employment before the company hired new workers and if a worker lodged a complaint, the federation would have the right to intercede. Last but not least, they exacted a pledge from Gianacelis to "release all the workers who have been detained in prison."

The following day, 22 February, the cigarette workers returned to work, ending the two-month-long strike that is generally taken to mark the birth of the Egyptian labour movement.

The author is a professor of history and head of *Al-Ahram* History Studies Centre.



## Jordan breaks ranks

Washington, with Jordan's help, is trying to impose the issue of terrorism on next week's Cairo Arab summit, writes **Hoda Tawfik** from Washington

The United States and Jordan, during discussions in Washington this week, made no secret of the fact that the announcement that Arab leaders are convening in a summit in Cairo came as a surprise to both of them.

According to the Jordanian minister of information, Jordan's King Hussein was surprised when the call for the summit emerged from the Damascus summit, attended by the leaders of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. It seems Jordan was expecting a mini-summit that would include Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinians. After his meeting with King Hussein, US President Bill Clinton's message to the summit was that he hoped Arab leaders would reaffirm their commitment to the understanding reached at Sharm El-Sheikh to confront terrorism in any country in the world.

Terrorism seemed out of context, as Syria and Lebanon were not part of the Sharm El-Sheikh understanding referred to by Clinton. The American president's other message to the summit expressed hope that Arab leaders would not presume that pursuing peace was impossible with newly elected Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu until there was concrete evidence to the contrary.

Is Clinton's call to address terrorism an attempt to divert the summit away from its main purpose, *Al-Ahram Weekly* asked Jordanian Information Minister Marwan Muasher. The minister replied, "In order to achieve reconciliation, we have to have open and frank discussions on all issues and differences between us. Terrorism is one of the issues Jordan wants to raise."

Muasher stressed that Jordan wants to have a larger role in the peace process. "Jordan can play a prominent part in ending the Arab-Israeli conflict," he said. Muasher believes that Jordan has to feature significantly in any reassessment of Arab relations with the US following the rise of the Likud Party to power in Israel.

He cited one important reason for the new role Jordan is seeking. "In the wake of the recent Israeli elections, Jordan stands out as the country which has exercised sound judgement by remaining neutral. Today, Jordan alone enjoys the trust of all Israelis, including the new government," he said.

In Washington King Hussein stressed his astonishment at what he called "the negative and bleak reaction of some Arab countries towards the newly elected prime minister of Israel". Standing beside Clinton on the White House lawn, Hussein said, "Netanyahu was elected in a democratic process. We have every assurance he will build on every step agreed upon in the peace process."

The US, in spite of its concern about the future of the Middle East peace process under the hawkish coalition Netanyahu is leading, is stalling for time until the Clinton administration establishes a rapport with Israel's new leadership.

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher confirmed that he will be making his first visit to Israel since Netanyahu's victory next week to meet with the prime minister-elect and his team.

Observers believe that Christopher hopes to reach out to the new leadership in Israel and make amends for Washington's patent support of outgoing Prime Minister Shimon Peres. He stressed that the US would continue to remain focused on preserving the past three years' achievements along the road to peace. Christopher also promised to remain closely in touch with Arab leaders during the run-up to their summit.

Numerous diplomatic channels have been used by the Clinton administration to try to water down the tone of the forthcoming Arab summit. The Arab summit has alarmed the Jewish lobby in the US, who have expressed anger and shock which was reflected in a discussion on the Middle East held by the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives. Republican Senator Tom Lantos said that he found it "extremely disturbing" that Egypt had taken what he labelled as a hostile and negative view towards the US government by organising an Arab front against Israel.

In response, the Egyptian ambassador to Washington, Ahmed Maher El-Sayed, wrote in a letter to Lantos: "If you choose to support the elected government of Israel in all circumstances and in whatever it does, right or wrong, I would expect you not to challenge the right of others to take a different and more objective stand, particularly if their objective is to promote the cause of peace."

"We do not threaten anybody and do not accept threats from anybody. You know that the relationship between Egypt and the US is beneficial to both sides, and is based on equality and mutual respect," the Egyptian ambassador said in his letter.



A UN inspector stands by his car in Baghdad in front of an Iraqi military site. Kofi Annan, chairman of the UN Special Commission on disarmament Iraq, arrived in Baghdad yesterday to urge Iraq to lift a ban preventing his inspectors from searching suspected weapons sites. A UN inspectors team was pulled out of Iraq on Sunday after Iraq refused them access to Republican Guard sites (photo:AFP)

## No longer in a rush

Warnings against "heads-over-heels rushing" to normalise relations with Israel often went unheeded under Peres. This is unlikely to be the case with Netanyahu. **Sayed Awad**, on the eve of the Cairo summit, charts the region's normalisation map

The controversial issue of normalising relations with Israel may prove to be too delicate for discussion at the Cairo Arab Summit next week. However, a number of Arab states have declared their intention to freeze the normalisation process if Israel fails to abide by the principles of the Madrid conference.

Israeli diplomacy has successfully imposed economic normalisation as a prelude to political normalisation with the Arab states. But notwithstanding such all-region gatherings as the Casablanca and Amman economic summits, the process of bilateral normalisation has varied widely between Israel on the one hand and the various Arab countries on the other.

Due to pressures exerted by Western countries, mainly the United States and France, the tide of normalisation was directed on two main fronts: the Maghreb and the Arab Gulf.

At the first front, increasing political and economic interaction between Israel and the Maghreb states activated economic cooperation, particularly after the Casablanca economic summit.

Morocco ushered in a turning point in Arab-Israeli normalisation in 1994 with the opening of two offices for communications and interest protection in Tel Aviv and the Gaza Strip, and allowing Israel to set up a counterpart office in Rabat. The late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin welcomed this step which would pave the way for establishing full diplomatic relations between the two countries, adding that "it was only a matter of time".

Political contacts between Israel and Tunisia moved from secrecy to openness, and from unofficial meetings to formal bilateral relations in less than two years. In August 1994, Rabin sent a special envoy to Tunis to negotiate the possibility of setting up an office for the protection of Israeli interests in Tunisia as a first step towards full normalisation between the two states. In November, Tunisia extended an invitation to an Israeli delegation to participate in a seminar on the Mediterranean's environment.

By January of 1996, a trilateral agreement between the Tunisian, Israeli and American foreign ministers resulted in opening Tunisian and Israeli liaison offices for the protection of the interests of both countries. The Israeli office has begun operating, and has been moved near the centre of the Tunisian capital.

Tunisia emphasised that it would link raising the level of diplomatic representation to progress in peace negotiations. The January 1996 agreement came after Israeli redeployment to the West Bank and the Palestinian National Council elections. However, the actual implementation of the Tunisian-Israeli agreement coincided with Israel's onslaught on Lebanon last April.

Unofficial contacts were maintained between Israel and Mauritania in order to establish communication offices in both countries. Mauritania's normalisation steps were motivated by the fact that establishing relations with Israel and renouncing the former alliance with Iraq are the only available alternatives to improve its channels of cooperation with the US and Western countries.

In June 1995, Jordanian sources revealed that the Mauritanian foreign minister met with his Israeli counterpart in Amman, in the presence of the Jordanian foreign minister. This meeting took place only 18 days after the latter had met with Shimon Peres in Madrid.

However, under pressure from Libya, which threatened to cut all aid to Mauritania, it was compelled to put a halt on normalising relations with Israel, following its latest cabinet change which occurred shortly after the Sharm El-Sheikh Peacekeepers Summit.

On its part, Algeria allowed its athletes and sports teams to play against Israeli contestants. Nevertheless, fears that this state of affairs might further intensify the Algerian crisis, in addition to public opinion's rejection of normalisation with Israel, especially on the part of Islamists, speeded up Algeria's change of heart. The Algerian foreign minister refused to meet his Israeli counterpart on the fringes of the Barcelona Euro-Med conference last November.

In 1993, Libya considered indirectly jumping onto the normalisation bandwagon. It's decision to send Libyan pilgrims to visit holy sites in Jerusalem was not without political motives. The move aimed at softening the US's stand with respect to Libya resulting from the Lockerbie incident. However, American intransigence took the wind out of Libya's sails.

Israel adopted a step-by-step normalisation strategy with the Gulf countries, with the help of the US during the time of the Gulf War. This strategy included attempts to mitigate the Arab boycott against Israel. The 1993 Oslo Accord between the PLO and Israel provided an opportunity to further improve Gulf-Israeli relations. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) announced in early July 1994 the end of the secondary boycott (imposed by the Arab League on foreign firms dealing with Israel) and the tertiary boycott (imposed on branches of companies dealing with Israel). Indications of positive developments on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks prompted a collective Arab decision to lift the direct boycott. Given that the end of the boycott had been a major American objective behind settlement efforts aimed at ending discrimination against US corporations dealing with Israel, both the US and Israel welcomed this decision.

Israeli chambers of commerce estimate that the Arab boycott has cost Israel more than \$40 billion since 1951, and was responsible for a 1-3 per cent decrease in yearly GNP. Israel believes that the weaker the Arab boycott, the greater its export potential with neighbouring countries, Israel's natural market. Other estimates indicate that the unpublished size of trade between the Arabs and Israel currently exceeds \$1 billion per year.

Israel has capitalised on all available opportunities to promote mutual cooperation with Arab Gulf countries. The aim here was to "build trust" among the different parties along the lines of Is-

rael's concept of peace — one which advocates exchanging diplomatic relations, freedom of movement for individuals and goods, and cooperation agreements pertaining to economy, water, infrastructural projects and regional security.

There has been an increasing openness to Israel from some Gulf countries more than others. In the Sultanate of Oman, direct but secret contacts which had taken place 18 years ago were finally made public, through multilateral negotiations hosted by Muscat. Yossi Beilin, Israel's deputy foreign minister visited Oman in early 1994. This was his second visit to Oman after having led his country's delegation in meetings of the action group on water resources in April 1993.

In October 1994, the Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz*, reported the Omani minister of state for foreign affairs had announced that his country would soon establish a diplomatic mission in Israel. The report was denied by Muscat on the grounds that this would be realised only if tangible progress with Syria and Lebanon is made, or through a collective GCC resolution. The GCC secretary-general emphasised that normalising relations with Israel was linked to establishing a comprehensive peace in the region.

Last January, Oman and Israel announced that they had signed an agreement to set up offices for commercial representation to reinforce bilateral cooperation between the private sectors of both countries.

Similarly, Qatar has proceeded with fast-paced normalisation with Israel. Foreign ministers of both states have been overtly meeting since 1994, in UN corridors and London, to discuss bilateral cooperation, particularly the possibility of extending a pipeline to transport Qatari natural gas to Elat, then to Europe. In the beginning of March, 1994, Qatar officially invited a delegation of 22 leaders of Jewish American organisations to visit the country.

Peres' official visit in April 1996 to both Oman and Qatar underlined the special position the two Gulf states occupied on the region's normalisation map. During the visit Israel and Qatar signed an agreement to exchange commercial representation offices. Shortly after this visit, Oman and Qatar were linked to Israel via a direct telephone network.

Significantly, this visit coincided with Israel's closure of the West Bank and Gaza. The closures caused serious damage to the Palestinian economy.

To bolster his image in the election campaign, Peres talked about increasing trade with Oman and Qatar. He wanted to show Israelis that his dream of a "new Middle East" was materialising.

In a similar vein, Bahrain received an Israeli delegation headed by the minister of environment in 1994 to take part in multilateral negotiations on the environment. Israel was selective in choosing its delegation in order to benefit politically from the occasion. In the same year, Bahrain's foreign minister met with the Israeli minister of environment.

The process may well grind to a halt. The formation of Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government next Saturday seems to underline that, for the moment at least, the wind has gone out of normalisation's sails.

Ahead of the Arab summit, academics and diplomats outlined their own views on Bibi and peace. **Sherine Bahaa** listened in

## Pieces of peace

Diplomats attending a seminar held in Cairo last week on the results of the Israeli elections agreed that there is now an atmosphere of apprehension prevailing in the Middle East. "It is not just Arabs against Israel, it is also Arabs against Arabs," said one diplomat.

The prospects for peace in light of Benjamin Netanyahu's victory was the topic of the seminar organised by the Egyptian Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity. Diplomats and intellectuals alike expressed their hope that future Arab strategy will be consolidated at the upcoming Arab summit in Cairo to be held 21-23 June. The participants viewed President Mubarak's call for an Arab summit as a positive step and a genuine attempt to break the vicious circle of Arabs reacting to actions initiated by Israel, rather than they themselves initiating action.

Though no invitation to the Arab summit was extended to the Iraqi government, due to tense relations with the Arab Gulf countries since the Gulf War, Iraqi Ambassador to Cairo Nabil Nejm received a warm welcome at the seminar. Nejm, however, preferred to keep a low profile, attending the seminar without participating in the debate.

According to Salah Bassiouni, former Egyptian ambassador to the USSR, the convening of an Arab summit in Cairo is the first step towards rescuing the peace process: "We have forgotten that the peace process is an indispensable part of the new order in the Middle East laid down after the Gulf War by former US President George Bush. I do not think that the US is ready to give up its role in this order."

Many commentators believe that Netanyahu's approach to the peace process is likely to follow the footsteps of the previous Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir, who followed a policy in Madrid of "not so much to settle as to stall". They argue that Netanyahu

intends to hold onto the pieces of peace he inherited.

Whether Netanyahu will stick to his predecessor's policy or not, Bassiouni argued that time factor is not necessarily solely to Israel's benefit. "Syria had played with the time factor until it killed Peres and converted time to be a pressure factor against Israel," Bassiouni said.

A prominent Palestinian participant said Netanyahu's victory came as an surprise to many Palestinians. According to the Palestinian source, who chose to remain anonymous, the Israeli society is primarily governed by the military. Outgoing Prime Minister Shimon Peres's efforts to bolster cooperation with the Palestinian National Authority did not go down well with military generals and the Israeli public.

The same source confirmed that Peres had presented a proposed document on the final status agreement to the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. The broad guidelines of this document proposed the establishment of a Palestinian state on 27.4 per cent of the territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

The document also discussed the redistribution of Jewish settlements in the autonomous areas, the establishment of a fund to be financed by the US to compensate those settlers who were forced to move. It was in this document that the classification of settlements into either political settlements or security ones was first introduced. The rehabilitation of refugees in autonomous areas was also addressed.

The source revealed that the Israelis have indicated they would hand over Azariya and Abu-Deceh villages outside Jerusalem, to the Palestinians as their capital. A secure passage between these two villages was offered in the document, under joint Israeli-Palestinian administration. "Arafat refused to discuss this issue, based on the conviction that Jerusalem is an Arab and

international cause," the Palestinian delegate said.

Dr Qadri Hefni, professor of psychology at Ain Shams University and a member of the Egyptian delegation to the Madrid conference, told participants that "Netanyahu did not win, rather it was the peace process that fragmented the Israeli society," he said, maintaining that as psychologists would say: "tension unites, while peace helps to bring about differences."

According to Hefni, the Israeli electorate did not choose between peace and war. "The electorate is more concerned with internal issues like security and refugees," he said. The Israeli society is not one unified national bloc, explained Hefni: "Over the past three or four years, more than half of Jewish immigrants came from the former Soviet Union with a different culture from those who came from the West. Similarly, the Arab voters [have] emerged as a real political force since 1967."

Said El-Naggar, former vice-president of the World Bank and chairman of the New Civic Forum, attributed the success of the Israeli hawk to Arab weakness: "There is no real force that can stand up to the Israelis. Syria is the only force that is in a real confrontation with Israel, the rest of the Arabs have pursued normalisation." El-Naggar believes that by choosing Netanyahu, Israelis want much more than what they are getting so far.

It is within this context that El-Naggar hailed the Damascus meeting and the coming summit "as a positive step". He wondered though whether the present Arab moves "are sustainable, especially if the Americans interfere through their various means." He argued that Arab states must find other alternatives beside summits, such as the Damascus formula where "Arab leaders can negotiate, reach conclusions and follow-up on their resolutions."



During the celebration Mohamed Amin Shalakami, Egypt's ambassador to Korea and Dr. Yang Hon, one of the prominent businessmen in Korea, Adel Afifi, president of the IAA Egypt Chapter, general manager, Advertising Dept and member of the board of Al-Ahram Establishment

### AN EGYPTIAN NIGHT IN KOREA; A NIGHT OF A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS

At the conclusion of the 35th Congress of the IAA (International Advertising Association) held in Seoul, Korea, the IAA Egypt Chapter held an Egyptian Night

In accordance with traditions, the Congress host country is the one to hold a party through which all attendees get acquainted with the country that will host the forthcoming Congress. Egypt was selected to host the 1996 Congress. This was decided in Zurich's elections which witnessed the participation of IAA Boards worldwide.

The Congress is held every two years in one of the countries that win in the IAA elections. The Egyptian Night, was started with the speech of President Hosni Mubarak, delivered through a video tape. It was displayed on three big screens to the 2500 members representing the elite in the area of mass media and advertising.

500 Mass Communication students in Korean & American Universities attended the event. At the end of his speech, President Mubarak invited members of the IAA to visit Egypt to attend the 36th Congress to be held in 1998

After the Korean side, the IAA in New York and the Egypt Chapter of the IAA delivered their speeches, Mohamed Amin Shalakami, Egyptian ambassador to Korea gave his speech thanking the Korean Government for its cooperation and welcomed the guests. All those attending or participating in the event hailed the Egyptian generosity and the great variety of Egyptian cuisines that have been shipped to Seoul. After this success, Semarimis Intercontinental Hotel seized the opportunity and held the Egyptian

Cuisine Week



A memorial photo after the success of the Egyptian Night in Korea, Mohamed Amin Shalakami, Egypt's ambassador to Korea and his wife, Adel Afifi, president of the IAA Egypt Chapter, Lela Zaki, vice president of the IAA for conferences affairs, and vice president of the IAA Egypt Chapter with the Egypt Chapter delegates to the 35th Congress, Ahmed Maher El-Sayed, Mohamed Youssef Hefni, Mohamed Ali Mohamed, Mohamed Salah, Mouna Abdel Nour, Abdel Aziz Farid, Gail Zaki, Hassan Daras and Mohamed Abdel Hamed.

# 'A basic human need'

Azmi Bishara, one of 11 Arab members of the Knesset, talks to **Samia Nkrumah** in Cairo about the need for Palestinian citizens of Israel to articulate a distinct national identity if they are to be recognised as a national minority

"Our main concern is to reconstruct Israeli society," said Azmi Bishara, lecturer of philosophy at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank and leader of the National Democratic Assembly (Al-Tajammu). Established a year and a half ago, Al-Tajammu was officially declared a party one month before last May's Israeli elections.

Bishara said that Al-Tajammu decided to run in the elections in response to "a public demand for a genuine political movement that would reflect Arab concerns and the complexity of their situation in Israel."

He believes that the Arabs in Israel have to engage in Israeli reality. "This reality includes the Israeli parliament. In Israel, there is no way of articulating a political movement without forming a party, and you cannot form a party without going to parliament," he explained.

By articulating its nationalist political position in parliament, the party will have more access to the media, Bishara pointed out. It will also benefit from finances from parliament. "But the most important gain is greater parliamentary representation of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel," insisted Bishara.

Al-Tajammu ran on a joint list with Hadash (the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), the biggest component of which is the Communist Party, rather than with the United Arab List (UAL) and the Islamic movement. He explained that Al-Tajammu is closer to Hadash in its social and political programme. Bishara believes that the UAL's position lacks clarity. "They were more concerned with negotiating with Labour for a cabinet position for an Arab. You cannot join a government if you do not agree with it. I call

that political opportunism."

Bishara argues that one cannot ask the whole Arab population to be one party. "This is neither needed nor justifiable as Arabs have different ideological and political positions. Having two parties meant more Arab votes, and more Arab votes means greater representation in the Knesset. The results at the end indicated that the Arab votes were accumulated in two big blocs," he said.

Nevertheless, to avoid losing votes, Al-Tajammu signed an agreement of surplus votes with Darawsha, leader of the Arab Democratic Party. Under this agreement, which is allowed in the Israeli electoral system, two parties can agree where the surplus votes go. "Our joint list with Hadash won five seats, but we got more votes than that, so Darawsha got our surplus votes and this enabled its list to win a fourth seat," Bishara explained.

Bishara was the mind behind the "blank ballot" tactic during the Israeli elections. His main motivation was to direct a message at former Prime Minister Shimon Peres from Palestinian citizens. "We are not in his pocket. We wanted to put pressure on Peres. Labour has governed Israel since 1948. It is the state of Israel. With the exception of seven years of Likud rule, Labour is responsible for all the rest. So we have no problem saying no to Labour," said Bishara.

The decision was taken at the height of the Israeli onslaught on Lebanon in April. Bishara said that the Arabs in Israel were the only Arab force capable of taking to the streets to demonstrate against the aggression on Lebanon.

Two weeks before the elections Bishara stopped campaigning for blank votes. Although he attacked Labour, he asked the

Arab population to vote according to their conscience. In the end, 95 per cent of the Arabs who filled in their ballot papers voted for Peres and five per cent chose Binyamin Netanyahu.

There were only 10,000 Arab blank votes against 70,000 Jewish ones. In Tel Aviv alone, there were 12,000 blank votes. "Peres needed another 30,000 votes to win. And had the 10,000 Arab votes all gone to Peres his problem would not have been solved. But I am very happy that it has happened. Let the 10,000 blank votes be a kind of memento for us, for our collective memory. There is something morally defect about all Arabs voting for Peres," commented Bishara.

From Bishara's standpoint, the rise of the religious right was not the only discouraging sign. "We were discouraged by Labour and by Peres. We are discouraged because the people in Israel did not vote for the deformed peace process which favoured the Israelis. Even the apartheid system that was created by Peres was seen by many Jews as a concession," he said.

Bishara believes that the outcome of the Israeli elections showed the true face of Israel. There were two ballots: one for the prime minister and the other for parliament. "The parliament vote was identity politics, but the vote for the prime minister was political. This split in the votes was a great mistake. It made people make compromises between different affiliations, which is the opposite of the act of voting in a democracy. Religious parties won at the expense of Labour and Likud," he added.

Elaborating on his party's motto "Israel, a country for all its citizens", Bishara said that the most important element in its programme is equality. He argued, "Equality

is more than individual rights. In a liberal democratic country, citizenship should be the criterion for rights. We propose citizenship as the criterion and not ethnic, national, cultural and religious affiliations. What kind of equality can we aspire to when Israel defines itself as a state of the Jews? We are not even recognised in Israel as Arabs, but as non-Jews. We want to be recognised as a national minority."

Al-Tajammu would like to see Arabs run their own affairs. Education and cultural affairs are a priority. "Until now Arab education in Israel has been run by Jews. We want to decide on our curriculum in Arab schools. We want an Arab television network, run by Arabs, instead of Jewish television in Arabic," Bishara said.

But how realistic is the objective of stopping the Israelisation of the Palestinian population? Bishara charged that what is realistic about his party's programme is that it gives Arabs a tool to deal with reality and Zionism. "We have programmes and demands, not slogans. For example, if a state already exists, why do we need a Jewish Agency and a Jewish National Fund or a law of return for any Jew who wants to return when Jews are no longer oppressed anywhere in the world?" he asked.

Bishara argues: "Israelisation is the negation of Palestinian identity, because it means being subjugated to the projects of others, who in this case are the aggressors, the colonialists. In an extreme case, it is highlighted by the plight of a Palestinian serving in the Israeli army in the Occupied Territories. He is part of the Israeli army, though the Israeli state is not his state. The state will accept him only

as someone who gives it a service. So long as Israel exclusively the state of the Jews it cannot be that of the Palestinians. The process of Israelisation will cease only if we can achieve the recognition of two identities, two nationalities within the state."

As for the more controversial concept of cultural autonomy which appears on the party's platform, Bishara said that he does not regard it as an alternative for equality. "If you suggest cultural autonomy without dealing with the question of equality first, it may allow the government to avoid giving Arabs equality. We reject a scenario where you have a Jewish state and the Arabs have their autonomy within it," he said.

The concept of cultural autonomy was an ideological platform Bishara developed eight years ago. "It was in response to a question of how to deal with Zionism after the defeat of the Arab nation and the demise of the Arab national movement. We reject Zionism, morally and ideologically," he added.

There were mixed reactions among Arabs and Jews to Bishara's campaign. The campaign was very much at the centre of public debate, which prompted some ministers to attribute Netanyahu's victory to its emergence. Among Arabs, it was welcomed with caution and fear. Some feared they would lose what they had. "I explained that our programme was not extremist, but a liberal democratic one," said Bishara. "I am concerned with value politics which combines humanist values and rationalism."

Bishara said that cultural autonomy is only acceptable to people if you do not use the word "autonomy" because the word has been perverted due to its as-

sociation with the West Bank and Gaza.

"But if you say recognising our national identity, that is acceptable because people are suffering from a severe identity crisis," he said. In the villages he visited during the campaign, Bishara was surprised at how much people needed to have their identity articulated, if not defined. "The need for identity is a basic human need," he maintained.

Al-Tajammu has links with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The party is assembled from different orientations including Fatah, the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Islamists and secularists, liberals and leftists. Bishara wishes to maintain a relationship of mutual respect with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). "We can be supportive of the PNA in certain aspects, or critical in others such as democracy and human rights. Protecting and defending people in the occupied territories is part of our struggle and parliamentary work," he continued. During the Israeli elections, the PNA tried to support certain candidates. According to Bishara, they discovered that they were making a mistake and, since then, they have not attempted to impose political positions upon the Arabs in Israel.

Bishara noted that his party has no firm or official links with Arabs outside the Occupied Territories and Israel because it functions in another legal system and because most Arab countries are in a state of war with Israel. However, Al-Tajammu enjoys good relations with certain intellectuals and journalists in Egypt and Jordan. "We want to have good relations with Arab democratic forces and with Arab governments. The questions is how?" Bishara mused.

## Stillborn ceasefire

Israel has broken the April ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel with its continued attack on civilian areas, writes **Zeina Khodr**

Across villages in southern Lebanon, residents fear the latest military escalation is a prelude to another wide-scale Israeli attack on Lebanon. There are also concerns that the April ceasefire deal will collapse with the right-wing victory in Israel since Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has been critical of the deal from the moment it was reached.

On 10 June, Israel lost five of its soldiers in the bloodiest resistance attack against occupying forces since Israel's 17-day offensive on Lebanon ended. Monday's attack brought to nine the number of Israeli soldiers killed since Operation Grapes of Wrath last April. Israel responded by shelling villages in the south, killing a Lebanese civilian. It also voiced threats that it would not "hesitate to retaliate even if it means civilians will get hurt".

The resistance attack did not breach the 27 April ceasefire understanding brokered to halt Israel's air, artillery and naval bombardments. The understanding bars attacks on civilian targets on both sides but sanctions armed resistance on Israeli forces in the nine-mile wide zone they occupy in South Lebanon.

Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres warned against escalating attacks in the south and Netanyahu vowed to "take care" of Hizbullah guerrillas once he forms a government.

"The atmosphere prevailing in the south is one of fear and anxiety where villagers have not even completed rebuilding what was destroyed by Israel's aggression in April," according to the French-language *L'Orient le Jour* daily. The opposition *Nida Al-Watan* daily expressed concern at the deteriorating security situation in South Lebanon: "Israel's pounding of civilian targets showed that it does not respect the ceasefire." While the pro-Syrian *Al-Sharq* daily predicted a dangerous period ahead in the region with a new hardline government in Israel.

But Ahmed Khalife, a senior researcher at the Institute for Palestine Studies, said a large-scale attack is unlikely for the time being. "It is not imminent, especially in light of the Arab summit in Cairo. Likud is not interested in sending a message which is destructive to the peace process," he said.

Mohamed Meshmouhi, deputy editor-in-chief of *Al-Safir* daily, said: "Netanyahu will deal with the buffer zone in a tougher manner than Peres. I don't want to say there will be another wide-scale operation, but I don't think the situation in the south will be calm. More heat is expected in the near future."

Meanwhile, southerners are paying a heavy price for being on the front-line. The village of Yuhmur-Schkief is under constant surveillance from Israeli military bases on surrounding hilltops, namely Ali Taber, Kelat-Schkief and Tabey outposts.

"We have never lived like human beings in this village. I was 16 when Israel started to hit here," said Shawki Nasr, a school-teacher. During Israel's Operation Grapes of Wrath — which killed more than 200 Lebanese, mainly women and children — Shawki's home was hit. Luckily, the Nasr family were taking shelter in Beirut.

After the onslaught, Shawki had no alternative but to return to his village — life had to go on. "I am a teacher, not a resistance guerrilla. I can't work at anything else because my health doesn't allow me. My salary is not enough. I earn \$30,000 pounds [US\$340] and I have a wife and two children. Where can I go? I have no money for rent," he said.

Shawki's children were also deprived of living a normal childhood. They grew up in an atmosphere of fear and are forbidden from playing in the streets at all times. "The children are always scared, especially after our house was hit. They sit in the corner and cry. But we have no other choice but to stay here," said Shawki's wife, Umm Mohamed.

When asked if they were afraid of bombing, nine-year-old Mohamed and his six-year-old brother Ali could only say: "I am afraid of bombing [and] warplanes — they hit us. Israel kills children." The trauma and fear Shawki's family feels is not exclusive to the south.

The livelihood of 1,300 fishermen is also at stake because of an ongoing Israeli naval blockade. The siege, imposed in February 1995, which violates Lebanon's territorial waters, does not allow them to venture more than a few 100 metres into the sea.

Fishermen in the Sidon port complain they are unable to catch enough fish to make ends meet. "There are none on the coast. We aren't able to fish in deep waters. Instead, our nets gather shells with sharp edges that cut through the mesh. This is expensive to repair," they said.

Their safety is also threatened. In the port of Tyre, they have come under attack. Israeli gunboats last week abducted three fishermen and led their boat to an unknown destination. In previous incidents, gunboats detained fishermen and released them after several hours of questioning.

The situation in the south is precarious and there are concerns that the ceasefire will not last even until a monitoring group is set up to deal with violations.

Meanwhile, inter-Arab contacts have intensified to counter the political changes in Israel. Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri has welcomed the upcoming Cairo summit saying it would strengthen Lebanon's position in demanding an Israeli withdrawal from the south. The summit is expected to reaffirm the principle of exchanging land for peace. Observers are stressing the necessity of Arab solidarity. But some analysts here say no tangible results will materialise because Arabs are deeply divided and they have not mapped out a clear strategy. If no concrete results emerge from the summit, South Lebanon may again become the nightmare of the Middle East when efforts towards full peace fail.



Palestinians in Gaza watch a TV broadcast of the Israeli Knesset meeting after the swearing-in ceremony of the new Israeli Likud-led government (photo: AFP)

## Taking off the gloves

Palestinian human rights chief Eyad Sarraj has been arrested by Gazan police — again. **Graham Usher** in Jerusalem follows his trials and tribulations

On 9 June, the commissioner-general of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights (PICHR), Dr Eyad Sarraj, was arrested by Palestinian police at his home in Gaza for the third time in six months.

As with Sarraj's previous detentions on 7 December 1995 and 18 May this year, no charges were made against him by the Palestinian Authority's (PA) attorney-general in Gaza, Khalid Al-Ah-Kidrah. There was only a cryptic comment on this occasion, that the arrest was "not related to his human rights activities, the work of his association or his freedom of expression". Unlike the previous arrests, however, when Sarraj was detained but treated "well", this time the PA meant business.

On 10 June, 12 Palestinian police officers raided the offices of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme — of which Sarraj is also director — where they "found" 95 grammes of hashish among Sarraj's papers. Meanwhile, in a

note smuggled out of prison, Sarraj wrote that he had been beaten and that the PA was trying to frame him on drug charges.

From the moment he assumed the position of commissioner-general of the PICHR last summer, Sarraj has been outspoken in his denunciation of the PA's human rights record, especially in Gaza. His arrest in December followed a public meeting in which Sarraj stated that of the 400 human rights complaints the commission had filed to the PA's attorney-general, "none had been answered". The May arrest came after the publication in the *New York Times* of an interview with Sarraj where he described the Palestinian regime in Gaza as "dictatorial, oppressive and corrupt".

But the spark for Sarraj's current detention appears less his statements to the press than a "personal letter" he wrote to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat after his release on bail from prison on 26 May. In an interview on CNN, the

PLO leader said that he had freed Sarraj because he had "apologised" to the PA. In his letter, Sarraj countered:

"You [Arafat] know that is not true. I apologised for any personal hurt caused to you but not concerning the facts. You are the first to know that the work of the PICHR, established by your decree, was damaged because of the PA's failure to cooperate. I did not go to the media until I had knocked on all the doors. My press statements did not exceed the painful reality... of corruption, nepotism and torture in prisons." Sarraj concluded his appeal by advising the PLO leader that "instead of controlling me you should control the mechanism [i.e. the PA's security forces] which undermines accepted standards of human rights".

On receiving the letter, sources say Arafat "exploded", ordered Sarraj's re-detention and allowed Al-Kidrah finally to take off the gloves. After being held incommunicado for four

days, Sarraj was summoned to a PA military tribunal on 13 June where he was charged with "striking a police officer" and remanded for a further 15 days. Two hours later, he appeared at a Gaza magistrate's court where he was "released" on bail on the charge of possessing drugs. Looking tired and shaken, Sarraj pleaded not guilty to both the drug and assault offences.

For Sarraj's lawyer, Khader Shkirat, the new assault charge is no less spurious than the drug charge. "Sarraj was remanded illegally by the military tribunal," he says, "because assaulting a police officer is not a security offence but a civil crime, which should be tried in a civil court."

It is a line of reasoning which has prevailed in the High Court in Gaza which, on 16 June, demanded that the PA's attorney-general give "clear reasons within five days" for Sarraj's ongoing detention. Three days on, neither Al-Kidrah nor Arafat has responded.

## CANADIAN DAIRY PRODUCTS IN EGYPTIAN MARKETS



CDC (CCL)



NEFERITY



Ahmed Khafaga, chairman of the board of Neferity Co has had a long run of success in Europe, Canada and the United States of America, providing foodstuffs of the highest quality to their peoples. The fruit of his efforts over the past five years, and the strong ties of cooperation between him and the Ministry of Agriculture in Ottawa have resulted in the signing of a purchase agreement of dairy products with the Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC), a division of the Canadian Ministry of Agriculture.

The first shipment of dairy products arrived in the form of salted and unsalted butter. A number of other shipments of butter, powdered milk and cheddar cheese is expected to reach Egypt by the end of the year, which Neferity will distribute in the Egyptian market. Neferity has a good reputation in offering quality foodstuffs from all corners of the world to the Egyptian marketplace, following the wishes of the Canadian Ministry of Agriculture, represented by the CDC to maintain high standards which Canadian dairy products enjoy. The Canadian San Malo company has been chosen to export these products via Neferity the sole importer of Canadian dairy products.

Why did the CDC choose Neferity as the sole importer of Canadian dairy products? Khafaga answered by saying that "This choice is not only because of our company's long-term cooperation with Canadians working in the field of dairy products, which began in 1991, but also because we were among the first Arab companies to enter the Canadian market and to gain its complete trust, which emerged as a result of our work



After the agreement was signed at the CDC in Ottawa, each side was given a copy. Office Program congratulates Ahmed Khafaga.

with the Canadian Dairy Producers' Association. We were also the first company to introduce cheese from Quebec to the Egyptian market. Our relationship developed with the CDC which gave us the opportunity to have developed a successful working relationship for all these years." The Egyptian flag was placed next to the Canadian flag during the signing of the agreement. Is this the first time that such a formality has been done during the signing of a commercial agreement? What is your opinion on this? The Egyptian flag was placed next to the Canadian flag during the signing of the contract, showing the trust and capability of the Egyptian company Neferity for its role in boosting commercial ties with the Canadian government.

## IRA blast Ulster talks

A BOMB this week in Manchester, for which the Irish Republican Army (IRA) claimed responsibility, shattered expectations that real progress would be made towards an end to the conflict in Ulster in the second week of the current all-party peace negotiations, reports Doaa El-Bey from London. Hopes had earlier been raised when the parties agreed to choose American Senator George Mitchell as chairman of the Northern Ireland talks.

The IRA selected their target well, if they were looking for a high casualty rate. The explosion went off on a sunny Saturday morning, when the streets were full of shoppers hunting for Father's Day presents. Also in the busy crowds were German and Russian visitors, who were in town a day before their national football teams met in the European Championships.

Had the IRA not given a coded warning to the police an hour before the bomb exploded, casualties would have been much higher. As it was, the police managed to evacuate 60,000 city-centre shoppers. The blast left more than 220 injured, a shopping centre shattered and 50 million pounds worth of damage.

The Irish government declared one day after the bombing that it was considering cutting all relations with Sinn Féin and barring it from entering the talks at all. Irish Prime Minister John Bruton said, "Brutal, murderous acts of this kind are appalling and cannot be excused or explained away as any form of so-called sanction." The Irish Republic had been exerting behind-the-scenes efforts to convince the British government to allow Sinn Féin, the IRA's political wing, into the talks without an IRA ceasefire.

Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams fell short of denouncing the act, saying on the day of the explosion, "Whatever the cause of this morning's incident in Manchester, Sinn Féin's focus remains firmly fixed on the need to restore the peace process, and we will not be deflected from that task."

British Prime Minister John Major strongly condemned the bombing, describing it as an insult to both nations. He called on the IRA to announce an unequivocal ceasefire and denied that the bomb or any other act of violence would impede the peace talks in Ulster.

Northern Ireland's unionist parties are now more adamant than ever that the issue of decommissioning IRA weapons must top the agenda of the all-party talks and not come at a later stage, as the Irish and British governments have been suggesting. (photo: AFP)



## Jailbird as kingmaker

Sheikh Hasina was undoubtedly more delighted than Begum Khaleda Zia about how disenchantment with Bangladeshi Islamists energised the secularist vote in last week's elections, writes Gamal Nkrumah

days when Islamabad held sway.

Today Sheikh Hasina is poised to become prime minister even though there was much uncertainty about the possibility of the election results producing a hung parliament. Her most serious rival is the widow of the general who seized power three months after Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's first prime minister, was assassinated in 1975. The widow, Begum Khaleda Zia, also entered politics after the assassination of a loved one — her husband, former President Ziaur Rahman, who was murdered by military officers in 1981. Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia have been feuding ever since. Sheikh Hasina suspects that General Ziaur Rahman had a hand in the assassination of her father and cannot forgive the general's widow. The fact that the two leading Bangladeshi leaders are at loggerheads is no great mystery. What is surprising is that the Bangladeshi electorate became an interested party to the dispute and has often fuelled the backbiting.

Overshadowed by the Indian elections, the Bangladesh election campaign was a low-key affair. Turnout was impressive: 73 per cent of the electorate voted. Over 440,000 security personnel and 40,000 troops were on duty, and the elections ran smoothly with very little of the violence that marred earlier elections. Since it gained independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh has lost two presidents through assassinations. There have been three military takeovers and numerous — officially 17 — coup attempts.

With most of its population illiterate, party symbols assumed greater importance than in usual in other countries. The boat, an all-important mode of transport in a country crisscrossed by rivers and streams, was the AL's symbol. The paddy rice sheaf was the BNP's. Rice is the staple diet of Bangladesh and the most important food crop in the rich alluvial soils of the riverine country. The symbol of the Jatiya Party (JP) was the plough, another agrarian sign, and that of the Jamaat Islami the scale of justice, a reminder of the importance the party attaches to the implementation of the Islamic Shari'a.

The International Rights Watch/Asia organisation came out with a report on the eve of the elections warning that the power struggle between Bangladesh's two leading lady politicians "has forced a situation of lawlessness and civil strife in which wanton acts of violence have become routine features of the political process." But the Bangladeshi ambassador to Egypt, Tufail Haider, insisted that the elections were free and fair and that violence was kept to a minimum. "Twenty-eight people were killed in various places all over the country and a

couple of hundred were injured," he told Al-Ahram Weekly.

There is a third political figure who is something of a dark horse. He is General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, a former military dictator who was unceremoniously driven out of power by the Bangladeshi pro-democracy movement in 1990. Later he was tried on corruption charges and imprisoned. He is serving a 13-year prison term. Undaunted, he directed his political campaign from his prison cell. His brother Kader jumped into the political fray too. Ershad contested five seats, including his hometown Rangpur, and his wife Rohshan ran for another four. Their adopted son, Saad, is the only family member who did not contest any seats and is staying put on the political sidelines.

Unfortunately, new ideas are not the prerogative of those who spend a long time in prison. General Ershad's ideas of governing Bangladesh have not radically changed since the days of his dictatorship. Nevertheless, the jailbird emerged as kingmaker. His JP now appears to have a decisive role to play in the hung parliament. He called Begum Zia's government "the demonic face of democracy". The AL is confident of forming a government with the JP, which in turn notified President Abdur Rahman Biswas that it welcomes joining the AL to a ruling coalition. "We have lent support to the AL," said JP Secretary-General Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury.

The AL has not held power since 1975. Together with the JP, the AL now leads a bloc of 167 seats. Another 30 seats are reserved for women parliamentarians, and re-polling in 27 constituencies has confirmed the AL as the most popular party in the country. Will there be a radical change in foreign policy? There will be a shift in accent and an improvement in relations with India. But the basic parameters will remain the same," Ambassador Haider assured the Weekly.

There is a widespread feeling in Bangladesh that the country's all-powerful, giant neighbour is insensitive to Bangladeshi pride and development priorities.

Bangladesh accuses India of harbouring tribal Shanti Bahini guerrillas in its Tripura state from where they organise incursions into the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh. New Delhi denies the charge. India is also blamed for the cross-border smuggling of a large range of goods. Again New Delhi turns a blind eye to such peevish ramblings.

But the most sensitive issue that dampens relations between the two neighbours is their bickering over water. During the oncoming rainy monsoon season, India is expected to release excess water through the Farakka Barrage along Bangladesh's northern border. India has done that sort of thing before. The Bangladesh rivers and waterways are then flooded often causing much destruction of life and property. The Ganges River, called the Padma in Bangladesh, is holy water in India. In Muslim Bangladesh only Allah is holy. Putting Padma against Ganges, the Bangladeshi Islamists are stirring up trouble. But the common man in Bangladesh is more worried about floods, power cuts, crop failure and clean drinking water or the lack of it. When water is short in the dry season, India is accused of withholding water supplies from Bangladesh — causing widespread water shortages. All Bangladesh's political parties deplore India's refusal to give Bangladesh its fair share of the Ganges, or Padma, waters.

Bangladesh, with a current Gross National Product (GNP) per capita of \$223, might be poor, but it is no irrelevant country. The Bangladesh electorate is just over 56 million — slightly less than the total population of Egypt, Iran or Turkey. With over 120 million people, Bangladesh is the world's second most populous Muslim-majority country. It fits the classic stereotype of a Third World country with all the accompanying economic, political and social ills of the world's less-developed nations. Bangladesh is a recipient of substantial humanitarian aid and disaster relief aid. Some \$2,405 million in foreign aid was promised by Bangladesh's Western, Gulf Arab and Japanese donors but only \$1,558 million was received in 1993-94. All economic and social indicators point to Bangladesh as a country in dire need of development.

The unsung heroes of last week's Bangladeshi general elections are Bangladesh President Biswas and caretaker government chief Muhammad Habibur Rahman. Bangladesh was embroiled in civil unrest and a crippling political impasse earlier in the year. Without the wise leadership of the 11-member caretaker government installed after opposition forces requested that the BNP government be replaced by a neutral one to preside over elections arrangements, last week's polls would have been a failure. The February elections were boycotted by the AL and other opposition groups. BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia was then forced to step down last March and the Habibur Rahman caretaker government ran the day-to-day affairs of state.

The most important aspect of the elections apart from the demise of the Islamists is the new policy of constructive dialogue between opposing political parties. "God rewards those who forgive and compromise," Bangladesh President Biswas said quoting the Qur'an. The Islamists were certainly not rewarded.



Sheikh Hasina

(photo: AFP)

## Southern dis-Comfort

An incriminating Senate report on shady land deals, partners who are convicted felons and a sexual harassment suit that won't go away — can things get much worse for Clinton, asks Tarek El-Tablawy

In Little Rock, Arkansas, "where the men are men and the cattle are nervous", there's not much to do during the day or, for that matter, at night. Entertainment is strictly limited to visiting some museums, lounging in the Capitol Hotel Bar or frequenting restaurants like Cock of the Walk, where they serve deep-fried catfish and deep-fried pickles.

If this does little to whet one's appetite, then the political gourmet can sink his teeth into the verdicts handed down by an Arkansas jury, deep-frying three of US President Bill Clinton's former partners and colleagues. Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker and Madison Savings & Loans head Jim McDougal and his wife Susan were recently found guilty on 24 out of 30 counts of fraud and conspiracy. McDougal was Clinton's partner in the Whitewater land development deal, which is approaching national scandal status for its alleged fraudulence.

In a briefing before reporters, Clinton said, "I've known Jim Tucker for years and on a personal level I'm sad for him and his family." Probably not as sad as Tucker, who faces up to 10 years in prison, as well as another criminal trial for tax evasion.

A moment of silence is also in order for Jim McDougal, who faces up to 84 years in prison. The former S&L head and Tucker, however, may attempt to reduce their sentences by plea bargains and singing louder than a country about the Clintons' role in the White water land deal. More than likely, this is what independent Whitewater counsel Kenneth Starr and his team of prosecutors are hoping for. Hook enough of the small players and you could end up firing the big fish.

Such a turn of events would be the White House's worst nightmare come true, especially given the mysterious reappearance of Rose Law Firm billing records in the White House long after they were subpoenaed. Although Clinton has not been implicated so far in any of Starr's investigations, his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, has not been so fortunate. A draft report released by Senate Whitewater Committee Republicans, which was published in the Washington Post on Sunday, concluded that the First Lady most likely played a role in restricting the inquiry into White House Deputy Counsel Vincent Foster's suicide, in order to keep potentially embarrassing documents under wraps.

The evidence suggests that Mrs Clinton, upon learning of Mr Foster's death, dispatched her trusted lieutenants to contain any potential embarrassment or political damage," quoted the newspaper. Foster had worked on questions about the Clintons' Whitewater real estate venture and a controversy over White House Travel Office firings.

Couple the finding of this report with the sexual harassment charge made by Paula Jones against Clinton, the conviction of three close associates, and the draft-dodging issue, the incumbent president could find that no matter how many times Dole puts his foot in his mouth, re-election will be a far cry from being easy. To make a bad situation worse, this week, Arkansas bankers Herby Branscum and Robert Hill are standing trial for allegedly submitting \$13,000 in phony expense vouchers to their banks and then channelling some of this cash to reimburse themselves for contributions made to Clinton's 1990 gubernatorial campaign. Clinton will have to testify again at this trial. At the very least, a conviction here could tie Clinton more closely to other wrongdoings while he was governor of Arkansas.

Clinton may be shaking. Dole and the Republicans rejoicing, but for Arkansas it is business as usual. At the Capitol Hotel Bar in downtown Little Rock, one local told a reporter, "Now, if Clinton were found out to be secretly Catholic, then we'd be talking scandal."

When Whitewater first surfaced in 1992, Jim McDougal told reporters that the financial figures revealed that Whitewater was nothing. "A sophomore accounting class would know it. But the arithmetic is beyond the comprehension of a gaggle of Yankee reporters," he said. He then went on to file for Congress, saying, "The Republicans have been starving America for 100 years. I dislike them intensely." He added that he had been "fighting the forces of oppression" since he was 12 and then produced a photograph of himself as a child in which he was dressed as a soldier. A little melodrama never hurt.

Except now — a time when Clinton is attempting to tout himself as a moral crusader, a liberal Batman of sorts. The Whitewater scandal seriously tarnishes this image, especially in light of the fact that in the 1992 presidential race Clinton backed away at the Republicans, dubbing them self-serving and cliquish.

"For 12 years of this Reagan-Bush era, the Republicans have let S&L crooks and self-serving CEOs [chief executive officers] try to build an economy out of paper and perks," he said. However, during the Branscum-Hill trial, prosecutors will attempt to prove that Branscum's \$7,000 post-campaign contribution to Clinton was linked to a same-day discussion between the two men on appointing Branscum to the state highway commission. They will also try to draw parallels with this and the \$180,000 in personal loans that Branscum's bank extended to Clinton for his 1990 gubernatorial campaign.

Other evidence presented by Michael Chertoff, the Republican special counsel to the Senate Whitewater committee, reveals that "new testimony before the Senate indicates that Mr Clinton himself took an active part in obtaining one of the original Whitewater loans — one evidently approved as a favour after the bank's political lobbyist intervened." Chertoff adds that when Clinton's accountant raised early legal objections to parts of McDougal's Whitewater proposal, "Mr Clinton pulled him aside and told him to back off."

Moreover, some of these loans were allegedly funnelled into Clinton's and McDougal's accounts to cover losses accrued in the failing Whitewater deal. These are all charges that Tucker could shed some light on if he folds under pressure from prosecutors. But even unexplained, or perhaps especially unexplained, they cast a dark shadow over the Clintons' political choices.

Democrats, on their part, are attempting to plug the holes in their sinking fiscal ship, arguing that the Whitewater issue is nothing more than a partisan witch-hunt aimed at derailing the Clinton campaign. Arkansas state history points to the opposite: that this is normal daily behaviour for the state's politicians dating back over a century. In a book entitled *Territorial Ambition, Land and Society in Arkansas, 1800-1840*, S. Charles Bolton cites an 1819 letter from Robert C Henry, a Kentucky carpetbagger who is trying to convince his brother to move to Arkansas. "Should I be favoured with the appointment of judge, I shall have it greatly in my power to serve my friends... we could do almost as we pleased," wrote Henry.

Clinton, if the charges are sustained, is familiar at least with the spirit of the text. McDougal followed the text in spirit and to the letter. Evidence presented before the Senate committee reveals that from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, a symbiotic relationship between Governor Clinton, McDougal and his associates existed. Chertoff notes, "For a time, McDougal had a say in state appointments, enjoyed personal access to the governor and won valuable state jobs."

Back at the Capitol Hotel Bar, the conversation is buzzing as freely as ever. Judges, lawyers, lobbyists, businessmen are toasting back drinks and discussing kickbacks, rake-offs, pay-offs, construction graft and hush money so nonchalantly that it leaves the casual observer wondering if Clinton ever really entertained the notion that he committed a few political faux pas at all. Prosecutors are, however, not wondering.

Even in the best-case scenario, one where Clinton emerges from this scandal guilt-free, he may not be politically unscathed. In essence, this case has all the makings of a national scandal that could leave Clinton jobless. It has sex, a suicide, bank fraud, misappropriation of funds and a fair degree of nepotism. It could, actually, be a mini-series on prime-time television.

For Clinton, it is a recurring nightmare. He told reporters following news of Tucker's conviction that he wanted to put matters behind him. Before this matter recedes, however, some questions will have to be answered. Still unexplained is why did the White House meet with senior Treasury Department officials to obtain confidential information on the Madison S&L criminal referrals? Why did Clinton attempt to keep a sympathetic Treasury official in place as the final decision-maker for the Madison investigation? And why did the administration not allow federal law enforcement officials access to Whitewater documents in Vincent Foster's office after his suicide? For one reason or another, Clinton has chosen to lie down with dogs, and has come up with fleas. The final question now is just how hard will he have to scratch.

Nonetheless, whether this amounts to a cover-up or just a lapse in judgment and a bad business call, there is a certain degree of irony, best reflected in the brochure Clinton and McDougal produced in the mid-1980s on Whitewater. It said, "Better bring your checkbook... this kind of a place won't stay a secret for long."

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# General's star rises

Yeltsin won fewer votes than expected in the Russian presidential elections and, to counter the Communists, he is grooming General Aleksandr Lebed for power, writes **Abdel-Malek Khalil** from Moscow

About 70 per cent of Russia's 106 million voters cast ballots last Sunday. Russian President Boris Yeltsin narrowly beat his main rival, Communist presidential hopeful Gennady Zyuganov. Soon after the declaration of the initial results, Yeltsin said, "The election results showed that the overwhelming majority of voters backed the course pursued by us over the past five years." Nevertheless, the Communists are not entirely out of the race. They still have a chance to prove their mettle in next month's run-off between Yeltsin and Zyuganov.

The Communists have strong support among important segments of the electorate and especially in rural and industrial areas. Yeltsin scored highest in Russia's two largest cities, the capital Moscow and the chief port and former czarist capital, St Petersburg, where the economic reforms have achieved limited results. The industrial centres of the Urals and Siberia stood staunchly behind the Communists.

Yeltsin won 35.2 per cent of the vote and Zyuganov followed close behind with 32 per cent. Ultrarightist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy collected less than six per cent of the vote, while centre-right candidate Grigory Yavlinsky got just over seven per cent. Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's score was hardly worth mentioning. However, the greatest surprise was right-wing General Aleksandr Lebed who won 11 million votes or about 15 per cent of the electorate's votes. Lebed emerged as the high-flying star. There were even calls for Yeltsin to step down and hand over the reins of power to him.

Yeltsin, in one of his first post-election moves, signed a decree announcing that Lebed, with his unexpectedly strong third place in the first round of the presidential election, would head Russia's Security Council, which oversees the Russian military and police forces. Following a brief meeting in the Kremlin, Lebed issued the direct endorsement Yeltsin had been seeking, saying, "11 million voters believed I could guarantee the security of citizens. I am an officer and must be worthy of their trust."

Defence Minister Pavel Grachev submitted his resignation to Yeltsin on Monday after being told of Lebed's new appointment. Grachev, who has been repeatedly criticised for his abysmal handling of Russian military affairs, refused to work under Lebed, his long-time rival. Grachev was regarded as a close associate of Yeltsin, but of late the Russian president has seen Grachev as a liability because of his poor performance as head

of the army and for his military disasters in Chechnya. Lebed opposed the invasion of the breakaway Russian republic from the very start and has accused Grachev of impeding the reform and modernisation of Russia's army.

Lebed turned down Zyuganov's offer of joining forces against Yeltsin and forming a "platform of patriotism". Lebed is very critical of the Communists' record. "Zyuganov can offer whatever he wants. We're through with Communism," he said. "Communism is over, dead and finished." The Communists are just as critical of Lebed, his style of leadership and lack of organisational skills. "Lebed has no party behind him, no mass party organisation, just a name," complained Gennady Seleznyov, the Communist speaker of parliament, after Lebed's refusal of Zyuganov's overtures. Other leading Communist Party personalities dismissed Lebed's alliance with Yeltsin as of little consequence.

There is a furor about the day on which the second round of the elections will be held. Election law stipulates that the run-off be held on a non-working day, preferably at the weekend. Election officials have so far proposed scheduling it on Sunday, 30 June. But the president, believing the turnout would be higher on a weekday, has prepared a draft law to declare Wednesday, 3 July as a public holiday. Yeltsin is trying hard to push the bill through parliament and will probably win the day.

Lebed, the youngest of the presidential candidates, was born on 20 April 1950 in the Rostov region of south-central Russia. He is a veteran of the Afghan War — a war that has helped shape his ideological beliefs and political orientation. Lebed, of working-class background, was quickly promoted through the ranks of the Soviet Red Army after graduating at the Ryazan Higher Airborne Troops Command School. He is a fervent nationalist who has repeatedly called for the reformation and rebuilding of the demoralised Russian army. Lebed feels that the revamping of the army is the first step towards the restoration of Russia as a superpower.

The results of the first round of the elections showed that a large number of Russians see Lebed as their champion and the nation's saviour. Lebed went into active politics after his resignation from the military. He has been a member of the Russian Duma, or parliament, since 1995. Many observers see Lebed as the real winner of the 16 June Russian presidential elections.



## Capitalist paradise lost

Great expectations followed by disillusionment is how **Miso Alkalaj** describes post-Cold War economic, political and social developments in Central and Eastern Europe

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1990 and the Soviet empire was obviously crumbling, the inhabitants of Central and Eastern European countries saw the West as a kind of paradise and market economy as the magic recipe that would soon bring them prosperity and affluence. They expected magnanimous financial aid as a matter of course. After all, the United States and other Western democracies had been lamenting the plight of these oppressed people for so long — surely they would now help them.

When given their first chance at free multi-party elections, citizens of former communist countries voted for any candidate who promised a clean and swift break with communism. This attitude was nicknamed the "monkey syndrome" — based on the observation of a Polish politician that "if the voters had a choice between a former communist and a monkey, they would vote for the monkey". The sooner they got rid of the old system, the sooner they would live in capitalism and be rich.

But soon dreams of prosperity started to fade. Financial aid was scant and what came did not trickle down to the man on the street. Free trade brought competition from technologically superior companies in Western Europe, the US and Japan; local manufacturers with their outdated machinery just could not keep up. Production dropped, workers were laid off and shiny shop displays offering the wealth of the world that few could buy became more a source of resentment and despondency.

Under socialism, unemployment was virtually unknown; having a job was regarded as a basic right. Now jobs became a "privilege" of those who were willing to make an effort. Socialist ideology always portrayed capitalism as a system based on theft and exploitation, while socialism was supposed to be based on honest pay for honest work and solidarity. As all things socialist were being rejected, many people started to believe the worst of both: that unemployment or poor pay were an infringement of their rights and that the only way to affluence was through dishonesty. Social discontent and crime soared.

Another problem became evident. Newly elected officials mostly came from the opposition; they were far from power under the old regime, so they had little or no experience at running the country. Even a poor driver with experience can handle a car better than somebody who has never sat behind the wheel before. Basic government did not function properly. With their lack of experience in hard-ball politics, new leaders were easy targets for Western politicians and businessmen who wanted to take advantage of them. The advice of Westerners was rarely questioned and assets were sold at bargain prices. Few realised that Western entrepreneurs came to make themselves rich, taking advantage of inexpensive natural resources and cheap labour.

Probably the worst aspect of new right-wing rulers was the fact that they managed to present themselves as grotesque caricatures of communist tyrants: most had learned the style of their politics in one-party states and their approach to government was "And now it's our turn!"

With the appalling state of the economy and rising poverty, it is understandable that voters in many East European countries reversed their votes at their second chance at free elections. Former communists — who reformed their parties' ideologies into various forms of social democracy — have already returned to power in Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and Hungary. Communist Gennady Zyuganov is presenting a serious challenge to Boris Yeltsin in the Russian presidential elections. These countries are hardly likely to return to one-party rule, but laissez-faire capitalism is definitely on the way out.

In fact, one might argue that the right-wing regimes who have been elected to power in the former communist states of Eastern and Central Europe have gone a long way towards rehabilitating the ideas of socialism and communism: their bungling rule, the widespread corruption of their officials and the collapse of the economies of their countries have convinced many a voter that communist rule was not that bad.

Is this left-to-right-and-back pattern likely to keep repeating itself? Judging from existing positive examples, countries which manage to stabilise their economies are likely to elect moderate centrist governments. The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Estonia — all of which enjoy a healthy economic recovery — are all ruled by governments which manage to avoid both rightist and leftist extremes.

Political stability in Eastern and Central Europe may therefore well depend on the success of economic recovery in these countries. We learn from history that political extremism, social strife and aggression go hand in hand with economic recession. Poverty causes despair and apathy — ideal grounds for the proliferation of right- or left-wing "saviours". If this is indeed a rule applicable to the future of the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the outlook is rather bleak.

The total population of these countries is over 328 million. CIA Factbook 1995 estimates the average gross national product per capita at \$4,558. This puts the average GNP per capita of these countries below the poverty level of \$5,000 per capita, as defined by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. According to CIA sources, only some 40 million (12.26 per cent) of the population of Central and Eastern Europe live in a country with a GNP of more than \$5,000 per capita — Belarus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Estonia. Some estimates are even more pessimistic: only the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia are above the poverty level — some 20 million people or just 8.59 per cent of the population of former Central and Eastern European socialist countries.

The aggregate inflation of former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe runs at 77.7 per cent — Belarus is the record holder with a whopping 29 per cent per month, measured by consumer prices in 1994. The total real gross domestic product of the region dropped by 3.1 per cent in 1995.

The writer is head of the statistics centre at the Joseph Stefan Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia.



THE OLD: A Russian World War II veteran makes his way past pro-Yeltsin supporters outside the Russian Duma. The elderly and pensioners have seen their savings disappear since Yeltsin came to power five years ago



THE YOUNG: A youngster peers from a window giving away Yeltsin posters in downtown Moscow. The young, unlike the old, favour the reelection of Yeltsin (photo: AP)

## Yeltsin's last hurrah

Plagued by flawed economic reforms and workers' protests, Yeltsin had to change his tune somewhat before this week's elections, writes **Faiza Rady**

Modelled on the US version of campaign politicking and replete with a barrage of opinion polls proclaiming Russian President Boris Yeltsin's gains and a massive dose of pro-Yeltsin media propaganda, the Sunday, 16 June presidential election results in Russia appeared fairly predictable. Although most foreign commentators dismissed Russian opinion polls for their notorious inaccuracy, political analysts continued to use poll results to predict that Yeltsin would capture about one-third of the votes, with his Communist opponent Gennady Zyuganov trailing behind with an estimated one-quarter. Voting results indeed confirmed the polls' inaccuracy. With 89 per cent of the votes counted on Monday, Yeltsin had captured 35 per cent of the vote to Zyuganov's 32 per cent.

On Sunday, voters nationwide flocked to the polls with an estimated 69 per cent turnout. Voting, which began in the far northeastern region of Chukotka and moved westwards across Russia's 11 time zones, was more active than during the December 1995 parliamentary elections, the central electoral commission reported. Yeltsin campaign chief Sergei Filatov told journalists that the turnout "is playing in favour of the Communists". However, an undaunted Yeltsin cast his ballot on Sunday, confidently dismissing the chances of a Communist victory: "It's out of the question," he bragged. But Gennady Seleznyov, the Communist speaker of parliament, predicted that Zyuganov had "very good chances of winning the second round", the Russian news agency Interfax reported. Since, as expected, neither of the leading candidates captured the 50 per cent of the vote required to win, run-off elections will be held in early July.

Until election day, Yeltsin's camp and the Communists were accusing each other of planning election fraud. To prevent rigging, the Communists mobilised a 200,000-strong contingent to monitor the 93,500 voting centres, and some 1,000 foreign observers joined the election watch. Yeltsin sent armed guards to supervise the polls. Thousands of soldiers patrolled a tense capital, protecting it from potential "acts of terrorism". Still, there was scattered violence. In Bryansk, in southwest Russia, a senior police official was wounded when a bomb exploded as he was leaving his house. And police in the southern city of Stavropol received calls warning them that several buildings had been mined.

Political analysts contend that most Russians interpret the contest between Yeltsin and Zyuganov as a choice between a continuation of Yeltsin's flawed reforms or a return to Soviet-era policies under the Communists. For millions of Russians, Yeltsin has indeed become the bogeyman of the market economy. He is so profoundly unpopular and evokes such passionate resentment that media experts decided to keep his picture out of any TV election campaign spots. The advertising strategy was simple: a spokesperson for Yeltsin, portrayed as the average voter, faithfully delivered the packaged Yeltsin message: "If we don't make a mistake on 16 June, if we continue along the way we

have chosen, the improvement will begin in one year." "A familiar theme this," commented political analyst David Hearst in *The Guardian Weekly*. "On October 28, 1991, Yeltsin promised the pain would last about half a year. In autumn 1992, he pretended to see the first signs of increasing production... The cynicism of these statements is extraordinary."

In Yaroslavl, an industrial town 260km northeast of Moscow, where Yeltsin was vociferously heckled throughout his campaign speech, workers vented their fury. "All we ever get from you are promises," was the common refrain, interrupted by the occasional curse. Miners from the Vorkutinskaya coal region, who like other workers had not been paid in months, angrily displayed their food coupons which they now receive in lieu of salaries. "This is not wartime, it is the reformed far north and we get coupons for God's sake!" shouted an enraged miner. "We risk our lives digging for coal and they pay us in bits of paper."

In effect, non-payment of workers' wages has become a permanent feature of Yeltsin's ill-fated administration. As a result of untenable working conditions and endemic wage delays, the miners' vote — which had helped Yeltsin win the 1991 presidential elections — most probably went to the Communists. Factory workers were just as likely to vote Communist. Since Russia started its head-over-heels privatisation drive, production has decreased by 50 per cent and lay-offs are rampant. Expressing the workers' despair Svetlana Vinogradova, a 43-year-old unemployed secretary, explained why she voted Communist. "In the past everyone had a job and there was no unemployment," she said. "We used to live in a superpower with a strong industry. Now all I see around me is banks. Who needs them? What do they do that's useful? We barely produce cars these days."

Since the late 1980s, some 90,000 companies have been sold, mostly at a loss. To fulfil an International Monetary Fund loan pre-condition, the government sold about three-quarters of the public sector to the companies' managers, who paid by borrowing from their company budgets. Many of the new owners relied on their long-established political networks to receive government subsidies. As a result, nascent private businesses continued to function like the public sector — with the owners capitalising on state funds, while pocketing the profits. In 1993, the cost of such direct and indirect subsidies amounted to 22 per cent of the gross national product.

According to many economists, Russia's path to the so-called free market has been aberrant — to say the least. Neither socialist nor capitalist, the country's hybrid economy defies theoretical denomination. Unable to otherwise define a system that has become chaotic, specialists now vaguely refer to "bureaucratic or political capitalism", "state corporatism" and "clientism". In reality, the economy's most salient feature is its non-productive rental and speculative base. "Even investment banks have no industrial planning strategy, no programme and no means to modernise and restructure enterprises," explained a

Russian finance expert. Moreover, social and political instability induces large-scale capital flight — at the annual rate of \$50 billion. It is, therefore, not coincidental that the left and centre opposition candidates unanimously promoted the return to a measure of state control over the economy, currency exchange barriers and the repatriation of exported capital.

With the economy in a shambles, large-scale labour protests and a dismal approval rating of six per cent back in December, Yeltsin's election lead may seem miraculous. The man who was until recently dubbed as "not smart" and whose notorious alcoholism caused Russians to ask if a dangerous buffoon was running the Kremlin, made a remarkable comeback. How did Yeltsin manage the seemingly impossible? Manufacturing consent through media manipulation may partially explain his success story. The largely pro-big business, pro-Yeltsin media packaged him by demonising Gennady Zyuganov and playing on many people's rejection of their Communist heritage. "As it is impossible to prove that Boris Yeltsin is good, after everything that has happened in the country, his campaign managers were trying to prove that the opposition is extremely bad," explained liberal economist and leader of the democratic opposition Grigory Yavlinsky. Until the eve of the elections, the networks were saturated with Yeltsin ads interspersed with horror tales of the Stalin-era gulags. "When I switched on the TV, I had the impression Stalin had died yesterday," commented a news analyst. Among this heavy-handed dosage of anti-Communist propaganda, Zyuganov's slots were few and far between. "It is almost as if the Zyuganov message is carried with an official government health warning," commented Hearst.

Beyond the propaganda strategy, Yeltsin readily acknowledged the failure of his economic reforms — seemingly veering from his course. After the Communists won last December's parliamentary elections, Yeltsin sacked his most visible neo-liberal ministers. He then somewhat distanced himself from his long-standing and much criticised US foreign policy alignment by appointing Evgenii Primakov, a Gorbachev man and long-time Soviet diplomat, as minister of foreign affairs. He also went to China, where he paid tribute to the achievements of a system that had realised the difficult transition to a market economy without dismantling its social welfare system. But most significantly, he stopped the controversial privatisation drive.

Political analyst Bernard Fréderick believes that these steps cannot be dismissed as mere campaign cosmetics. "Such measures express a new political orientation. They signify the victory of the statist nationalist camp over the Western neo-liberals. And this new orientation is determined by the Russian people's formidable resistance to the social changes that have been imposed on them since the break-up of the Soviet Union," wrote Fréderick. Accordingly, if Yeltsin makes it through the second election round in July, he may have to show the Russian people yet another face.

## Privatisation push

SIX new laws aimed at speeding up the privatisation programme and raising the volume of private investments in Egypt were submitted to the People's Assembly this week for discussion.

Topping the list is the new Banks and Credit Law which was finally passed last Saturday, allowing non-Egyptians to own more than 49 per cent of the capital of joint-venture banks, on the condition that the shares of each individual not exceed ten per cent. Non-Egyptians will be also allowed, according to a second law submitted to the parliament on Rules of Commercial Registration, to take part in a number of commercial activities such as exporting Egyptian goods.

The third law regulates the residence of foreigners in Egypt. According to this law, foreign expatriates will be exempted from the registration system of foreigners. The interior minister will now have the authority to extend the residence period of foreign investors and tourists from three to five years.

Fourth on the list is a law which exempts securities of the tax on capital gains so as to promote private ownership of public sector assets and attract small-scale investors to trade shares on the capital market.

Along similar lines, the assembly is also due to discuss a new draft law that exempts mutual funds from the income tax. This draft law aims at realising a tax equality between mutual funds and individuals whose share profits are tax exempt.

The assembly also began discussions on a new law which regulates construction works. The law aims at promoting the role of the private sector in solving the housing crisis in Egypt and to shelter private investors from onerous bureaucratic red tape and paying excessive fees to secure a building permit. These complicated procedures and fees were a main reason behind the private sector's reluctance to invest in rental housing.

The six laws, which were submitted to the assembly by the government two weeks ago, reflect Prime Minister Kamal El-Ghazouli's efforts to speed up privatisation, double foreign investment and raise national growth rates.

## Industrialists aid Iraq

A DELEGATION representing the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), which recently paid a five-day visit to Iraq, stressed that they will do their best to ensure that the basic needs of the Iraqi people are met.

Mamdouh Thabet Mekki, vice-president of the FEI and head of the Egyptian delegation, speaking before over 300 members of the Iraqi Federation of Chambers of Commerce (IFCC), said that Egyptian industrialists understand the reasoning behind the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the international community, but are distraught by the current state of Iraq's industrial infrastructure and its consequences on the population's welfare.

Officials from the Iraqi Federation of Industries and the IFCC told members of the Egyptian delegation that greater cooperation between the industrial sectors of both countries is a must. They added that Iraq's industrial sector has deteriorated to a degree where production has almost ground to a halt due to a shortage of raw materials and spare parts for the equipment.

In addition to the official meetings, representatives of the Egyptian food and pharmaceutical industries met with their Iraqi counterparts, who drew attention to the country's need for surgical thread, antibiotics, antibiotics and spare parts for pharmaceutical factories. Also on the list are commodities such as sugar, oil, tea, infant formula and cereals.

## Depositors' luck

El-Sherif, the giant among the defunct Islamic money investment companies was also the last to fall, leaving thousands of its depositors clamouring for their life savings. The prosecutor-general spoke to Mona El-Fiqi of his plans to refund the disheartened depositors



Mona El-Fiqi

For depositors in El-Sherif Money Investment Company, there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel of financial ruin the company is in. Government officials recently announced that the sales revenue from the sale of El-Sherif's assets to El-Shorouq Company in February 1996 will be used to fully refund depositors by May 1999.

El-Sherif is but one of 22 money investment companies (MIC) established in the mid-1980s to channel savings into investment projects, and claiming to offer an "Islamic alternative" to the banking system, whose interest payments are considered by a school of Islamic jurisprudence to be a form of usury in violation of Islamic Shari'a. But several years ago, these companies were forced to close their doors, unable to repay depositors after the government instructed them to restructure their flawed financial system. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of depositors were left out in the cold, having handed over a total of LE2.8 billion, \$2.2 billion, 25,000 pounds sterling, 160,000 French francs and 44,000 Saudi riyals to these MICs.

On El-Sherif's ledgers alone were the names of 55,720 depositors, with total deposits amounting to LE1.3 billion. To date, only about LE333 million of this sum has been refunded. According to the deal struck between the government and El-Shorouq, the first group of depositors scheduled for a refund, received 25 per cent of their deposits in May. This group, however, was comprised of those who had deposited less than LE50,000. Officials add that refunding of 25 per cent of the company's total deposits will continue for the next four months.

"I've accepted an LE10 million letter of credit from El-Shorouq," Ragaa El-Arabi, the prosecutor-general told Al-Ahram Weekly. This move was a step towards protecting the rights of El-Sherif's depositors. In other similar steps, El-Arabi explained that the assets of El-Sherif will be handed over to El-Shorouq gradually, with the new owner to receive assets equalling the sums refunded to depositors. "El-Sherif's assets will remain under se-

questration until the company pays off their depositors in full," said El-Arabi.

Those who have received money from El-Sherif consider themselves among the lucky few. To date, the prosecutor-general's office has succeeded in refunding a total of LE16.1 million and \$18,000, distributing this sum among 1,641 depositors in three MICs — the El-Safaa Company, Dar El-Wafaa for Industrial and Commercial Investment and Nahdet El-Shari'a.

Whatever success realised in refunding depositors in small MICs, however, was tempered by the problems encountered when dealing with larger MICs. With 159,670 depositors listed on its books, El-Rayyan Company is a case in point. The company holds deposits estimated at LE1.5 billion, of which only LE466 million have been refunded.

El-Rayyan's depositors have already received a 10 per cent refund, and another 10 per cent is currently being doled out. However, said El-Arabi, "The company's assets will cover only 23 per cent of the total deposits. Until new assets appear, the only option we are left with is to close the company's file." Priority, he added, was given to small depositors.

Complaints on the part of depositors were levelled at the government as well as the MICs. Some complained that while they had invested in US dollars, the government refunded them in Egyptian pounds at the exchange rate valid at the time of deposit, not the rate in effect at the time of refunding.

"When I heard that 25 per cent of El-Sherif's deposits were to be refunded, I went to the company to ask, but they didn't give me any in-

formation and said I should return again in two weeks," complained Saad Khalaf, one of El-Sherif's depositors. "If the government wanted to solve the problem, it should have, from the beginning, stood by these companies and assisted them in solving their financial problems until they repaid depositors. It shouldn't have just closed them down."

Another El-Sherif depositor, who wished to remain anonymous, was even less optimistic. "Despite all the declarations that the company's assets will be sold and the deposits refunded, I haven't received a single pound from the LE32,000 I invested in the company," she stated. The main problem, explained El-Arabi, is that in the case of some small MICs, the assets to cover the deposits are there, but they need more time to sell them, gain liquidity and refund depositors. There are those MICs, however, for whom time is not the issue. Says El-Arabi, companies such as El-Salam Investments have no assets at all. It's owner simply skipped the country, leaving the 1,706 depositors high and dry and shortchanged out of LE50.7 million. Investors in this company, he said, will only receive their money if a court order is procured, or the owner gives the prosecutor-general the legal right to sell the company's assets and refund depositors. El-Salam's depositors are not the only ones left holding the torch by the flame. Depositors from seven other MIC are confronted with a similar scenario.

Fearing the worst, some depositors have exchanged their refund vouchers for goods purchased from "in-kind" repayment firms — a move that El-Arabi staunchly opposes and has outlawed. Recalling that he warned depositors away from these firms several times, El-Arabi added, "At first we agreed that some depositors would be allowed to exchange their refund vouchers for durable goods." The idea was short lived. Depositors began voicing complaints that the goods were sold at twice their retail value. El-Arabi subsequently closed down these firms.

"I also warned the companies participating in these firms that if they sell to depositors, the general prosecution department would not give them the refunded percentage of the vouchers," he stated. But this move did not please some of the depositors who deemed it better to purchase over-priced goods instead of taking the risk of not receiving any of their cash.

## Market report

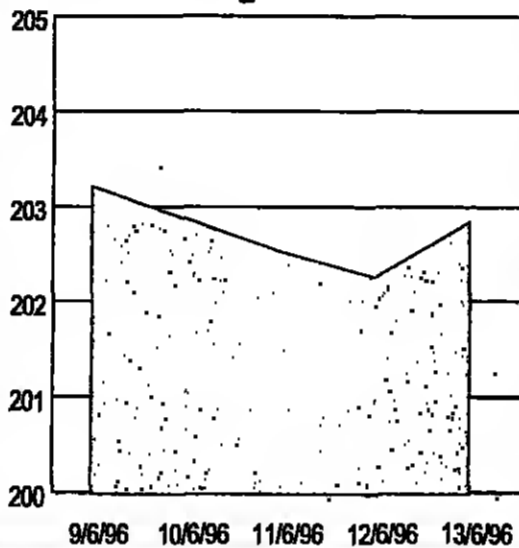
## GMI slump

FOR the third week in a row, the General Market Index (GMI) witnessed a decline, slipping by 0.14 points during the week ending 13 June to close at 202.86. Trading activity was also slumped, with the value of total transactions falling to LE75.1 million compared to LE199.4 the previous week.

Capturing the lion's share of market activity, the Egyptian Financial and Industrial Company traded 360,975 of its shares, or 19.71 per cent of total market transactions. With the value of trading in its shares reaching LE12.12 million, the company's stock gained LE1.64 per share to close at LE34.5. It was the shares of the Egyptian Developed Technology Company, however, that witnessed the greatest increase in share price. Closing at LE14, the company registered a 51.35 per cent increase during the week's trading.

The greatest loss was borne by the Hoechst El-Sharkia, with the value of the company's stock dropping by 11.11 per cent to level off at LE7.2 per share.

In all, the share value of 30 companies increased, 18 decreased and 35 remained the same.



## IMF public image

IN A first of its kind move, a group of top International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials met last week with members of the press in an effort to gauge public opinion on the IMF's policies, reports Yasser Sobhy. The visiting delegation included members of the IMF's executive board, which includes Egyptian national Abdel-Shakour Shaban, the IMF's executive director for Egypt and 12 other countries. The delegation met with representatives of the banking sector, the stock exchange, the tax authorities and business.

Although the executive board is not involved in the day-to-day economic policy negotiations with individual countries — a task typically carried out by the IMF's technical staff — it has final say in approving agreements reached between the IMF and countries attempting to implement reform programmes.

In a meeting last Monday, members of the press conveyed to the delegation the negative image held by the public about the fund and its policies. In the eyes of the average Egyptian,

said members of the press, the IMF's policies have failed to bring about tangible results such as higher wages and lower unemployment rates. Moreover, the IMF's concentration on technical, monetary and financial issues seem, to the average consumer, to be at the expense of more important issues related to growth.

The delegation attributed this negative image of the IMF's policies to the short-term costs of reform, usually felt most by low-income groups. They explained that the IMF's experience in countries such as Chile and Colombia shows that speedy transformation to market economies brings with it long-term gains. The reforms implemented in Egypt, they said, attempt to generate growth by creating a wide investment base supported by financial balance and structural reforms including privatisation.

The delegation's next stops on the same kind of mission will be Jordan and Yemen.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

## PROSPECTUS IN EGYPT CANADA FOR MINERAL OILS, PRODUCTION AND BLENDING OF JOINT STOCK COMPANY 'UNDER ESTABLISHMENT'. SUBJECT TO LAW 230 FOR THE YEAR 1989

**Name of the company:** Egypt Canada for Mineral Oils Production and Blending.

**Legal status:** An Egyptian joint-stock company, (subject to Law 230 for the year 1989 and its executive charter)

**Date of preliminary contract:** 12/5/1996

**Legal headquarters:** Cairo

**The aim of the company:** Collecting and refining mineral oils and mixing basic oils and producing mineral oil using the modern American technology D.C.H.

The company can carry out other projects or change its activity within the framework of the investment law. It can also contribute or share in any projects that the not subject to Law 230/1989 on condition that it receives the approval of the General Investment Authority and abide by law 95/1992.

**Location:** Tenth of Ramadan City.

**Fiscal Year:** Starts 1 January and ends on 31 December. The first fiscal year begins on the date of establishment and ends on December 31st of the following year.

**Company Duration:** Twenty Five years starting on the date of listing the name of the company in the trade register.

**Capital:** Authorized capital: \$15,000,000

Paid issued-in capital: \$7,500,000

Distributed over 150,000 cash nominal shares, each valued at \$50. The founders deposited a quarter of their shares in the capital in Banque Misr, the Qasr El-Nil branch. It is one of the banks licensed to receive demands for public subscription for account of the company being founded.

## Founders:

Name	Nationality	# of shares	%	Value in \$
Banque Misr	Egyptian	15,000	10%	750,000
Mr. Yehia Ahmed El-Sayed El-Komi	Egyptian	30,000	20%	1,500,000
The Egyptian Arab Company for Trade (Yehia El-Komi and Co.)	Egyptian	15,000	10%	750,000
Titan Projects Ltd.	Canadian	37,500	25%	1,875,000
Mr. Amin Mahmoud Nemr	Egyptian	7,500	5%	375,000
Public subscription		45,000	30%	2,250,000
Total		150,000	100%	7,500,000

The number of shares held by the founders represents 70% of the Authorized Capital.

**Shares offered for public subscription:** 45,000 shares worth \$2,250 million. Each share is valued at US\$ 50. Both Egyptian and foreign individuals and institutions can subscribe to the offering.

Date of receiving stock debentures shareholders can receive debentures within a year from the company's listing in the Trade Register.

**Date of starting and closing subscription:** Subscription will last for two months starting 1/7/1996. It will be closed as soon as the offering is fully subscribed, with a minimum of 10 days from the opening of subscription.

**Subscription lots:** A minimum of 10 shares for individuals and 1,000 shares for institutions.

The following branches of Banque Misr will receive subscription orders: Cairo branch, overseas branch, Orman, Qasr El-Nil, Taleat Harb (Alexandria), Ismailia Branch, Port Said main branch, Suez branch, Mansoura, Damanhour, Zagazig, Banha, Tanta, Damietta, Beni Suef, Sohag, Assiut, Aswan.

## How to subscribe:

A subscription application must be filled and the money paid at the above mentioned branches. The application must be accompanied with identification documents.

## Sum to be paid at subscription:

A quarter of the share nominal value (US\$12.5) is paid, in addition to two Egyptian pounds in issue fees per share. The rest of the value of each share is to be paid within a maximum of five years from the date of the establishment of the company. This will be according to the way and date decided by the company's and according to article 9 of the Articles of Association.

## Issue fees include:

- expenses of printing temporary certificates and stock debentures
- Marketing expenses
- Administrative fees and other expenses
- Bank commission
- Expenses and issue fees for governmental entities

In LE	120,000
80,000	
20,000	
50,000	
20,000	
300,000	

## Board of Directors:

The company will be run by a board of directors consisting of a minimum of five members and a maximum of nine members. These are appointed by the shareholders' General Assembly for three years. It is necessary that each member be the shareholder of a minimum of at least \$10,000 worth of shares. This is to fulfil the right of shareholders to be represented in the board of directors each according to their contribution to the capital. The General assembly is entitled to bring in an expert who does not comply with the previous requirements, as member of the board.

With an exception of the previous requirements, the founders have appointed the first board of directors to include:

- 1- A representative of Banque Misr.
- 2- Mr. Yehia Ahmed El-Sayed El-Komi
- 3- A representative of the Egyptian Arab Trading Company (Yehia El-Komi and co.)
- 4- Two representative of Titan projects Ltd.
- 5- Mr. Amin Mahmoud Nemr.
- 6- Three representatives of the subscribers to be nominated by the company's first general assembly meeting.

**Managers in Charge:** They will be nominated after the board's first meeting.

## Company plan for the utilisation of subscription revenues:

- Collected used lube oils from the local market.
- Importing used lube oils from other international markets.
- Re-refining the used lube oils collected from the local market or from the international market to produce Base oils.
- Blending the Base oils and produce finished lube oils.
- Importing the equipment, machinery, cars and vehicles needed for the collection of the used lube oils and importing production lines chemicals additives for the process unit and Blending units. Importing different kinds of lubricants and lube oils and marketing it in the local and international market.
- Selling in the local market the company products of: Base oils, finished lube oils and different kinds of lube oils and lube oils.
- Exporting the company products.
- Refining the petroleum products.
- Setting up future projects.

**Projected Yield on the paid-in capital:** 15 %

**Founders apply for the license to establish the company in two month after the closure of subscription.**

**List of contracts ventured into by the founders during the five years prior to the subscription:** none

The Prospectus was reviewed by the CMA and was found consistent with laws 159/1981, 95/1992 and its executive charter. It's worth mentioning that the CMA's list approval is not an acknowledgment of the company's commercial feasibility or its ability to post certain results.

Approval Number 210 dated 22-5-1996

## FOUNDER'S AGENT



**BANQUE MISR**

Investment Trustee Department  
Tel: 3561111-3560822

### Clampdown on substandard food

IN A symposium held on Tuesday at the Nile Hilton by the State Information Service, Fakhry Zikry, head of the Administration for Food Supply Investigation, announced that a computer protection draft law is being prepared and will be put into operation. Zikry also stated that there will be a clampdown on substandard salt producers. 800 tons of substandard salt about to be sold within 10 days were seized, apart from another 300 tons of invalid salt.

# MONEY & BUSINESS



### Environmental legislation in Egypt

A LECTURE on environmental legislation in Egypt will be given by Salah Hafez, chairman of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency in the British Council Library at 8.00pm on Sunday, 23 June 1996.

This is the first in a series of public lectures taking place in the British Council Library as part of its monthly cultural programme. The programme includes lectures on literacy, economic reform, clean and renewable energy, and other topics.

## Economic reform is not at the expense of the poor

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund (IMF) board delegation, currently in Egypt on a visit, said that the economic reform programme will increase the competitiveness of the Egyptian economy and upgrade the standard of living.

At a press conference, the IMF delegation to Cairo, stated that the economic reform programme will not add to the burden of the

poor by raising prices of commodities. The only aim of the reform is to maximise agricultural production and to redress the budget deficit.

During the press conference, the delegation was briefed on the negative viewpoint of the man in the street regarding the demands of the IMF from the Egyptian government, particularly its persistent request to

raise prices and its equivocating response of the Egyptian government's demand to have the last portion of its debts written off.

The IMF delegation explained that the organisation responsible for debt annulment is the Paris Club, which is composed of grant-making countries. They set the conditions for debt annulment and set the time for it.

The delegation clarified that the economic

reform programme may be painful in the short run, but experience shows that this pain comes as a result of the late cooperation with the IMF.

With regards to Egypt, the delegation expressed its optimism as Egypt managed to achieve a 4.5 per cent growth rate. The delegation attributed this success as a result of the launching of a strong base for in-

vestment, plus the other monetary reform measures speedily taken by the government.

The IMF board's visit to Egypt is the first of its kind to any country applying economic reform measures with the fund.

The delegation included Dr Abdel-Shakour Shalan, as well as representatives from the USA, Japan, Canada, Britain and Ireland.

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AT A launch event held at Le Meridien Cairo, American Express announced the offering of a new rewards programme for all its card members in the Middle East.

According to Mr George Efthymiou, the vice-president and general manager of American Express Middle East: "The new membership rewards programme has been developed in appreciation of our card members. This is our way of saying 'thank you' for every time they use the American Express Card. All of our card members in the region are being invited to join Membership Rewards. They'll earn one membership rewards point for every dollar they charge with the card, anywhere in the world. Their points will add up and they can then be exchanged for free rewards from any of our partners."

The uniqueness of the American Express Membership Rewards Programme is due to both the range and depth of the rewards available from the many different partners. There are six international airlines operating from Europe, the Middle East, United States, Africa and Asia; 3 major international hotel chains and two chains of high-quality retail outlets. In addition, membership rewards points do not expire, unlike other similar programmes.

From these partners, American Express card members exchange their points for rewards such as a free airline ticket, free room nights or large discounts at hotel restaurants and also for free shopping vouchers. Over time, more partners will be added to the programme offering card members even more rewarding choices.



Managers of American Express who attended the reception. From the left: Mr Omar Morad, the General Manager in Egypt; Mr George Efthymiou, the vice-president and general manager in the Middle East; Mrs Wafaa El-Labadi, the head of marketing and SE sales in Egypt; and Mr. Kamal Bosh, the director of sales and marketing for the Middle East

With an automated system it couldn't be simpler. All the card member has to do is enroll into the Membership Rewards Programme and use the American Express Card for both personal and business spending. Then the "points" will just keep adding up with every transaction.

A Middle East Rewards Service Centre has recently been established in Bahrain. The centre is staffed by a team of dedicated Bahraini customer service staff, all experienced in meeting the high expectations of American Express card members throughout the region.

Membership in the programme is free for the first year and just \$25 per year thereafter for all American Express Cards enrolled. For Platinum card members the programme will always be free. Once enrolled, card members will earn points for virtually anything purchased with the American Express Card. Whether it is for a family dinner, a business trip, buying groceries or simply petrol for the car, spending on the American Express

Card is rewarding.

If card members obtain supplementary cards for all members of their family they will earn rewards points quicker since all spending on the basic and supplementary cards will accumulate into the Membership Rewards account.

Finally, card members will earn Points twice when combined with some of our partners' programmes. For instance, if a card member is enrolled in the Gulf Air Falcon Frequent Flyer programme and purchases a Gulf Air ticket with the American Express Card, they will earn Membership Rewards points and Falcon miles at the same time. In other words, they'll be rewarded twice for the same transaction.

In conclusion, Mr. Efthymiou stated that "the new Membership Rewards programme makes the American Express Card the most rewarding card in the Middle East, offering an enormous variety of rewards in a very unique way. It is simply our thank you to our valued card members every time they use the American Express Card."

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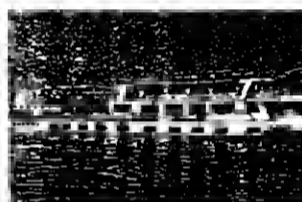
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A card holder can also issue cards to his wife, sons or other relatives who will be entitled to receive specified amounts of money.

A card holder is also entitled to receive a deposit card as well as balance inquiries and statements

For more information, contact the head office on 1113 Corniche El-Nil, Cairo  
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Al-Ahram Organisation has established an Arabic e-mail network, using Al-Ahram's resources and the most modern means to offer communications services via the Internet in Arabic. The network operates within the framework of Al-Ahram Press Organisation, which offers the following services:

For ministries, organisations and banks, the provides the use of e-mail, a fast and private way to send messages, 24 hours a day, from the organisation's centre to its branches domestically and abroad.

Additional services offered to businessmen include specialised daily bulletins: late morning and evening news; economy (banking, money, business, investment, tourism); culture; daily and weekly political coverage and analysis; activities of Arabs residing abroad; etc.

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## Al-Ahram Weekly

### The pledge hedge

Having risen to power on the shoulders of Jewish extremists and Likud hardliners, Netanyahu is now making good on his partisan pledges and campaign promises to his supporters. These are, however, the only promises he appears ready to keep.

He has handed over to an orthodox Jewish party, which was instrumental in helping him form his coalition government, the Settlement Ministry post. This not only bodes ill for West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, it bodes catastrophe, David Levy, a Likud moderate reluctantly holds the foreign affairs portfolio after manoeuvring staunch hardliner Ariel Sharon into the newly-established National Infrastructure Ministry. Should Sharon accept the post, his authority, coupled with that wielded by the Settlements Ministry, will likely render dreams of securing a comprehensive regional peace as dead as Rabin.

Netanyahu has also given ample indication, outside of his cabinet appointments, that compromise with Arabs is an infrequently used word in his vocabulary. Although he has stated a readiness to meet with Assad and Lebanon's Hwari, the meetings, says Netanyahu, will be held on the condition that no party walks in with preconditions. If this was not conditional enough, Netanyahu has asserted that Jerusalem is not an issue for debate, Palestine will not be and the Golan will not be exchanged for peace between Israel and Syria.

He encouraged Arafat to continue cracking down on Palestinian hardliners, but added that security remains his top priority. Israel's army, said Netanyahu, will have "full freedom to act against terrorism". Given that these actions will take place within Gaza and the West Bank, military manoeuvres on the part of Israel in these territories are likely to ignite more violence than they will thwart. In essence, he is digging a grave for the PNA and ushering them in.

The Arabs, however, are unwilling to engage in any unilateral capitulation or concession-making. The sooner Netanyahu realises this, the sooner peace will cease to be a term thrown around as lightly as the promises he makes.

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# A time for visionaries

An unambiguous vision of peace by next week's Arab summit conference, and an insistence that Israel honour its agreements, could save the beleaguered peace process, writes **James Zogby**

The Arab summit in Cairo can make an invaluable contribution to the search for peace in the Middle East. It can restore balance to what has become a distorted process and save the entire region from the devastation that would accompany the collapse or even deceleration of the current peace effort.

Arab Americans, much like the Arab leaders preparing to meet in Cairo, are committed to a peaceful and prosperous future for our people — a future in which rights are regained, security is ensured and economies developed, bringing new hope and opportunities to our long-suffering region.

The summit's final declaration will have a political impact on many target audiences: the Arab world, the US, Europe, and the Israeli government and people. A properly framed declaration in Cairo can ignite the hopes sparked on 13 September 1993, and can present a new challenge to the peacekeepers. A statement that focuses on vision, emphasises positive principles and establishes a unified Arab response to the current crisis will do much to counter disillusion.

While such a declaration in and of itself would be of historic import, it will have an even greater impact if made within a visionary framework. Peace, after all, is not an abstraction. The realisation of a just and comprehensive peace will create a dramatic new reality for the entire region. What needs to be com-

municated is a compelling Arab vision of the future and the possibilities it holds for all the peoples of the Middle East — a vision so attractive that people will be drawn to it. It is imperative that the promise of this future be understood so that it can be accepted and the status quo rejected.

To realise such a peace will, of course, require compromise. To this the Arab leaders have already committed themselves. But compromise is not surrender; compromise in its truest form occurs when two parties, instead of "giving up" their assets, invest them in each other in order to create mutually beneficial dividends — so that the rewards achieved by each are greater than the initial value of the investment. As envisioned by the architects of Madrid, Israel returns lands, Arabs give recognition and cooperation, and both sides benefit from a future of expanded opportunities for all.

Investment must be mutual; the compromise must be reciprocal: the Arab leaders must state this clearly and emphatically. The new government of Israel must come to understand that the Arab world is committed to a peace based on mutuality and reciprocity.

This commitment is no more than the reaffirmation of the fundamental ground rules that govern the peace process and establish its firm foundation.

Only by affirming mutuality and reciprocity will the heads of state make it clear that ground rules al-

ready established should be honoured, that the agreements signed and the timetables for their implementation must be honoured. Mutuality and reciprocity, for example, require that Israel act in compliance with all its commitments in the Paris Economic Protocol and Oslo I and II, promptly resume final status talks on all issues (including borders, refugees, water and land rights, settlements, and Jerusalem), in good faith and without preconditions; recommence negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks on the basis of the previously agreed-upon Madrid ground rules; and cease all attempts to change facts on the ground (by such methods as expanding settlements or altering the situation in and around Jerusalem).

It was, after all, in response to these agreements and based on a mutual commitment to those ground rules that several Arab heads of state initiated important confidence-building measures. For such gestures to continue, they should insist that Israel's commitments to mutuality and reciprocity must be reaffirmed.

For example, it was an Arab initiative to ease the secondary boycott on Israel in response to an Israeli commitment to freeze settlements. Since then, some Arab states have even begun to develop direct trade links with Israel. Meanwhile, under the Labour government the settlement population increased by 30 per cent in the past three years. What if the Palestinians were so flagrant in their failure to comply with their commit-

ments? The declaration issued by the forthcoming Arab summit needs to emphasise that, without mutuality and reciprocity, confidence-building steps towards Israel become surrender — which is intolerable.

To insist that such commitments be made by Israel is only doing what the US, the co-sponsors of the peace process, have been urging the Arabs to do: "waiting and seeing" and "not prejudging." The Arabs must, indeed, "wait and see" whether the new Israeli government honours its commitments and behaves in a manner consistent with the principles of mutuality and reciprocity. And, until it does, we will "wait and see" regarding future confidence-building measures and normalisation.

The Israeli people, it is said, made a choice. Some say they chose fear over hope. Some say they chose security and peace on their terms and rejected mutuality and reciprocity, choosing to return to the old paradigm by seeking to maintain all of the gains of the past two or three years (increased recognition, acceptance and trade and the end of the Intifada), while giving little beyond hollow words in return.

Now that Israelis have chosen a new leadership, the Arabs must give that new leadership a choice: mutual peace and security, or a reversal in the peace process from which they have benefited so greatly.

As the Arab leaders present these two alternative paths to the government of Israel, they should rest as-

sured that they have significant allies in their camp — the overwhelming majority of the Arab people who want peace based on justice, the world community that has affirmed the principles of a just and lasting peace, and a substantial body of opinion in Israel (and the US), which will insist that the new Israeli government make the right choice. The Arab heads of state are operating from a position of strength. Peace can continue if they affirm its vision and its principles and define, in unambiguous language, the terms of its engagement. By being firm in their commitment and visionary in their approach to peace, they will give strength to their allies and those who are committed to a lasting peace.

This is not the time for extraneous debates, counterproductive threats, or the airing of divisive internal petty grievances. This is the moment to accept the challenges of history and to be strong.

Presenting a visionary commitment of a comprehensive peace, insisting that Israel honour its commitments and agree to mutuality and reciprocity, and making Arab-Israeli relations conditional on full compliance with the terms of peace will ensure that this summit will be an historic event. It may well establish that it is the Arabs who occupy the high moral ground.

The writer is president of the Washington-based Arab American Institute.

## The Arab summit and Madrid

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed questions whether an Arab summit can stand as an expression of the continuation of the Madrid peace process rather than its antipode

For years, the possibility of an extended Arab summit seemed as elusive and unattainable as a mirage hovering just out of reach. But Arab leaders are finally coming together in Cairo tomorrow, the differences between them piling before the enormity of the common threat they face following Netanyahu's accession to power.

While this long overdue closing of ranks is to be welcomed, it must not stop at the convocation of the summit or at the attempt, however sincere, of various Arab parties to bury their differences. What really counts at this critical moment is the summit's ability to come up with a strategic pan-Arab vision capable of standing up to Netanyahu and of salvaging the peace process.

From the many statements Israel's prime minister has been making, especially during his electoral campaign, it is clear that he is placing himself outside the Madrid framework. The peace process launched in Madrid was based on three Security Council resolutions, 242, 338 and 425 (on Lebanon), which were distilled by agreement among all the parties who attended the conference and throughout the negotiations since, into the land-for-peace formula. In fact, all the agreements signed to date are based on this principle and on the terms of reference established in Madrid.

In a flagrant breach of this principle, indeed, of the whole concept of peace as adopted in Madrid, Netanyahu has openly declared that he will not restore the Golan to Syria. While Israel has in the past interpreted Resolution 242 as entailing the restoration of most, and not necessarily all, of the Arab territories it occupied in 1967, it has never before interpreted the resolution as meaning the restoration of none of the territories of a given Arab state.

With the entire peace process hanging in the balance, the Arab regimes have every interest in dispelling any doubts as to where the responsibility for this new crisis lies. To that end, I believe they should move the summit from the purely regional into the international plane, not only by projecting their meeting as an affirmation of the Arab commitment to the peace mechanism adopted by an international conference in Madrid, but also by inviting the sponsors of the peace process to the Cairo summit or to a follow-up meeting.

The presence of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, of Russian Foreign Minister Evgeny Primakov, of representatives from the EU and the UN and of other international observers would highlight the summit's character as an updated version of the Madrid conference and a symbol of Arab determination to continue with the peace process in defiance of Netanyahu's obstructionism. While the Israeli electorate is entitled to elect the government of its choice, the Arab regimes are entitled, for their part, to require the Israeli government to honour its international commitments, which may only be rescinded by agreement of all the parties involved.

Projecting the Arab summit as an updated version of the Madrid conference is not incompatible with the idea of postponing the economic summit scheduled to meet in Egypt next November and of making its convocation conditional on Israel's implementation of agreed-upon peace commitments. There can be no talk of economic incentives and of a Middle East market as long as Israel makes military dissuasion the basis of a process it attributes to peace. Nor is it possible to proceed with economic multilateral talks while the bilateral land-for-peace formula is not applied. The criterion at this very moment is whether Netanyahu will honour Israel's commitment to redeploy its forces in Hebron.

President Clinton is all for the convocation of an Arab summit, if only because it can help him circumvent a major difficulty. The US president strongly supported Peres against Netanyahu during the Israeli election campaign, on the grounds that the former upheld the peace process while the latter opposed it. Netanyahu's victory at the polls has forced Clinton to make a U-turn. Because it is him, not Netanyahu, who now faces election in the coming months, and because the all-powerful Jewish lobby in America is more likely to give its support to Netanyahu than to Clinton, the American president might find an Arab summit which supports the peace process a useful counterbalance to the pressures brought on his administration by the American Jewish lobby.

Russia, the EU and the UN will also be interested in supporting the summit, the first because it will re-activate its role as co-sponsor of the pro-

cess, the second — notably France — because it can overcome its marginalisation at the hands of successive US administrations, the third because the legitimacy of the whole process is based on Security Council resolutions. All international parties would like to see an Arab summit upholding the continuation of the peace process, despite Netanyahu's defection.

It might be difficult for the Arab regimes to sustain a line endorsing a peace process that has been abandoned by Israel, especially that Netanyahu's accession to power will confirm the rejectionist argument that the whole peace process was doomed to failure since its inception. To defeat this argument, the Arab regimes will have to ensure the absence of loopholes within their own ranks. This runs counter to the pre-summit decision to exclude Iraq from the summit and declare, beforehand, that it will not be invited, a decision that can only reinforce rejectionism and enhance its appeal for the recalcitrant Arab regimes.

The Madrid process was based on the widespread belief among Arab regimes that the Iraqi regime had become their main enemy and on the assumption that the Israeli Labour government was a lesser evil than Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Today, these regimes cannot assume that Saddam is worse than Netanyahu. But bringing Iraq back into the Arab fold is a difficult, if not impossible, task unless Egypt, the only country in the region which maintains contact with all the others, plays an active role in this regard. Nor should it hesitate to do so, for peace, in the final analysis, involves more than ending the confrontation with Israel. It also entails putting an end to the reasons which fuel contradictions among the Arabs themselves and expose their societies to various forms of violence, including the spread of terrorism.

That is why the defusion of the press crisis earlier this week is to be commended as a step in the right direction. For the absence of press freedom means the absence of a forum for democratic debate, the only mechanism which can prevent violent clashes between those who call for pursuing the peace process to its ultimate end and those who see the present developments as validating the rejectionist logic at this critical juncture in the history of the entire region.

## A minimum of concord

By Naguib Mahfouz

Discussion of the likely ramifications of the results of the Israeli election, even though not officially on the agenda of the Arab summit, will undoubtedly cast their shadow on proceedings. Yet the rationale for the summit remains regardless of what happens or has happened in Israel. President Mubarak, after all, initiated a series of meetings with Arab leaders before the elections. What cannot be denied, though, is that the electoral success of Likud has given impetus to the search for a united Arab stand.

The summit is most likely to produce a short term strategy vis-à-vis the peace process and Israel, though it may well have a touch more profound effect on inter-Arab relations. Certainly the expectation is that the summit will reaffirm the Arab commitment to peace, and will demand the implementation of the terms of agreements already concluded. Such demands have the advantage of making abundantly clear just who is obstructing peace. And such a clarification, by bringing international opinion to bear on Israel, can only be to the benefit of the Arab parties to peace.

As far as inter-Arab relations are concerned our aim should be to attain the minimum of concord to allow the creation of some kind of economic integration between Arab states. I am sure that Egypt will have specific proposals to put forward in this connection.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmany.

### The Press This Week

**October:** "Netanyahu has caused the Arabs to awaken from the dream of a rosy peace and to realise that... they have allowed Israel to give or take according to its own desires... Not only is Arab land endangered, but Arab lives as well. It is important that Arab solidarity should return... yet this time it will return not in response to the wishes and nationalist dreams of an Arab leader, but as a prerequisite to saving Arab existence." (Ragab El-Banna, 16 June)

**Al-Ahram:** "The keys to success at the forthcoming summit is more Arab solidarity, a total rapprochement and emphasising that the Arab condition for achieving peace is a full Israeli withdrawal. Without this there would be no difference between Peres and Netanyahu... nor between a rotten peace propagated by an Israeli premier or one produced under Israeli nuclear hegemony." (Ihsan Bakr, 16 June)

**Al-Akhbar:** "While Washington is urging the Arabs to proceed cautiously, Israel is saying 'NO' to everything under the sun and propagating plans for Erez Israel... overlooking the fact that this notion was made void by the Intifada. Perhaps it is testing the waters. My advice to those who advocate Israeli expansion and see things only from the Israeli angle is, 'never underestimate... the Arabs'." (Nabil Zaki, 16 June)

**Al-Arabi:** "We call upon Arab leaders to take a joint decision to suspend everything until an Arab approved peace is achieved — no normalisation, representative offices or exchange visits with the Israelis. Let this be the decision; the key to clearing the Arab atmosphere... In the face of danger, brothers unite and forget their differences. We do not reject Arab rapprochement — in fact we call for it. Yet Israel is not to be forgotten — Israel... is the real danger which threatens us all." (Diaeddin Davoud, 17 June)

**Al-Ahram:** "The forthcoming Cairo summit comes... in the words of President Mubarak, as a declaration to the world that the split in Arab ranks is at an end and that a new start has been made to unify Arab ranks." (Mohamed Basha, 16 June)

### Timely tactics

**Al-Shaabi:** "We are witnessing two great events that revive our hopes... that the clock cannot be turned backwards instead of move forwards — the semi-complete Arab summit and the demise of the infamous [press] Law 93... both at the same time." (Magdi Ahmed Hussein, 18 June)

**Al-Wafed:** "The Arab summit has other great benefits that were never mentioned — it hastened the dissolution of the Press Syndicate crisis and the trap of Law 93." (Magdi Mehanna, 17 June)

**Al-Ahram:** "President Mubarak's historic stance has put the brakes on those who mess around with the nation's welfare. His sense of the sanctity of freedom and the security of the nation is greater to that of any of them. They are a minority that excel only at hypocrisy and harming both the regime and the nation." (Mustafa Bakri, 15 June)

**Al-Gomhuriya:** "Now there are no extremists or moderates in the Press Syndicate, nor governmental or opposition members... journalists are all patriotic Egyptians who want a strong nation, a strong government and a strong opposition. They want press freedom for one and all. Journalism without freedom of expression is no more than dead letters!" (Kamel Zohairi, 15 June)

**Al-Ahali:** "If the Arabs use their pressure cards skillfully, the Israelis will eventually realise that following the trail of rabbis and extreme Zionists can only lead to a dead end. The first card should be a unified stance against normalisation." (Lofy Waked, 19 June)

**Al-Shaabi:** "The Press Syndicate is living its most glorious days. It is no longer confined to defending the freedom of journalists but has become a bastion of defending all freedoms. The resignation of its head and council, along with the General Assembly's strong decisions in combating attempts to impose Law 93, is a good example to all on how to fight for one's rights and not to give in to the aggressive attacks on people's freedoms." (Talaat Romaih, 16 June)

Compiled by Hala Saqr



President Mubarak's features always remind me, initially at least, of the faces of ancient Egyptians, as recorded in Pharaonic bas reliefs, and it is for this reason that I have chosen to depict him in profile. But this ancient Egyptian element is merely a first impression, one that is almost inevitably followed by an appreciation of those features that are genuinely his, concentrated around the mouth and cheeks but most apparent in Mubarak's smile, a smile that is at once spontaneous and solid.

## Close up

Salama A. Salama

### Summit shadows

While arrangements for convening a comprehensive Arab summit were being confirmed, bumpy attempts were made in certain quarters to calm American and Israeli "fears" and to stress the fact that this summit was not directed against Israel. Indeed some official statements stated baldly that the summit had nothing to do with the fact that the fate of the Middle East peace process, post-Israeli elections, was now in the hands of Netanyahu and his supporters on the Israeli right. King Hussein, returning from his visit to Washington, saw nothing to interfere with a reiteration of his optimism regarding peace in the region.

Within a few hours the summit will have convened. Yet in the run up to the meeting nobody has troubled to allay Arab fears, fears that have been fanned by statements made by both Netanyahu and his supporters concerning the peace process. Neither America nor Israel has taken the trouble to define its current position vis-à-vis the magic formula established by the Madrid peace conference, the "land for peace" formula that underwrote the Oslo and Cairo agreements, the Jordanian-Israeli agreement, and which formed the basis of Syrian-Israeli negotiations.

The policies of the Netanyahu government have yet to assume their final shape. They are, in any case, unlikely to be made public until after Netanyahu's coming visit to Washington, where he will meet President Clinton and other US administration officials. These policies will also become clearer in the light of Netanyahu's expected meetings with a number of Arab leaders led by President Mubarak and King Hussein. Only after such meetings will it be possible to determine the intentions of Israel's right wing forces regarding the peace process.

In the meantime, though, certain things are clear. Under Netanyahu, Israel's management of the "peace battle" will undergo a radical transformation, not least through the new prime minister's emphasis on the absolute priority given to the Israeli concept of security, a priority that might eventually lead to freezing the final phase of negotiations with the Palestinians, a refusal to return the Golan Heights, and — here I might be being optimistic — an insistence on maintaining the status quo in Jerusalem.

It is not particularly constructive, at this juncture, to pay lip service to an assessment of Netanyahu's own options. Rather, our concern should be focused on the options with which the Arab summit will deal and the choices it will make, so as to deny Israel the ability to benefit from inter-Arab disputes. Attempts by Israel to play Arab countries one against the other must be systematically foiled. There are many indications that Netanyahu's foreign policy will follow the old colonialist tactic of divide and rule, successfully implemented on occasion by Peres with the backing of the US.

The problem now, of course, is that for the next few months, as domestic considerations come to dominate the agenda in Washington, the US administration is unlikely to be in a position to exert any pressure on Netanyahu. Therefore, the role of "honest broker" will be governed during the coming period by domestic US considerations on the one hand, and by the Arabs' ability to unify their ranks, on the other.

The danger is that during the next phase the entire Middle East will enter a grey period. The shadows will be darkest, however, if the summit fails to achieve a minimum of sincere understanding as to how to deal with the extreme right-wing Likud and its concept of peace.



## No longer the promised land

Israel is changing. The concept of a purely Jewish state has not been realised, and the dream of a promised land has been relinquished. Yet this, writes Qadri Hefni, is only the beginning

Since the foundation of Israel, Israelis have had to contend with two successive problems connected with national identity. The first was the relationship between Jewish and Israeli identities; this has been replaced, today, by the relationship between Zionism and Israeli identity. These sources of identity — Judaism, Zionism and Israeli nationality — concur upon the legitimacy of the state of Israel. Differences arise, however, over the conceptual foundations of the state: its relationship with Jewish history, with its non-Jewish inhabitants, Jews elsewhere in the world, neighbouring countries, the international community.

The roots of the problem of the relationship between Israel and Judaism predate the founding of Israel, and can be found in the very origins of Zionist ideology, and the prevalence of secular Zionism over the teachings of religious Talmudic Jews.

The fact that the creation of Israel was the product of a predominantly secular movement did not quell other religious trends. On the contrary, the struggle between religion and the state is still very much alive. Israel has managed to accommodate this reality. The conflict between national and religious identity in Israel has never been so profound as to threaten the existence of the state. Rather, the conflict as it stands pertains to the nature of the government within a country, the existence and "mobile" borders of which neither party has called into question. It would also appear that the conflict between state and religion in Israel is part of the worldwide conflict between secularism and religious fundamentalism. Finally, and more importantly, there has been no practical cause to clearly distinguish between the interests of Israeli and non-Israeli Jews throughout the "no war-no peace" period, which culminated with the Israeli victory in 1967.

The conflict between state and religion, therefore, implies the acceptance of certain prerequisites for the full realisation of the Zionist dream. These are: the total Zionisation of all Jews and the end of any Jewish rejection of Zionism; the end of the Diaspora and the gathering of all Jews in Israel; the achievement of ethnic purity within the Jewish state and the removal of the Palestinian population; Jewish cohesion and homogeneity through the elimination of ethnic discrimination among Jews; and finally, the alignment of the state's political boundaries with the boundaries defined by scripture: "from the Nile to the Euphrates".

Of these prerequisites, the only one to have been fulfilled, at least in part, is the last, as a result of the 1967 War.

This achievement in itself brought to the fore a problem which, until then, had been latent in the discussions of various Zionist conferences. "Who is leading whom?" Is the leadership of Israel to be vested in the Jews of Israel, the inhabitants of the state that won the victory of 1967? Or in the Jews of the Diaspora, by virtue of their greater numbers and wealth? In the event of the former, Israel becomes the ultimate authority for the rest of the Jews in the world. In the latter case, the idea that it was her increased knowledge of the language that induced her to go from the *hijab* to the *nigab*.

I don't know who Umm Salahadin's friends are, but I can cite off-hand dozens of Egyptian women in all walks of life who do not wear a *nigab*, and whose strength certainly does not come from a pretty face or figure, but from real intellectual and moral value, education and dedication to their jobs and families. There are also the millions of Muslim women in the fields, factories, offices, banks, you name it, who contribute to the development of their countries, and who do not derive their strength from the way they look, or dress.

What Umm Salahadin writes is dangerous and misleading, because it deliberately falsifies history, relies on controversial writings, has no basis in the Qu'ran, and contributes to racism and fanaticism, because it sets Muslim women against one another, and certainly against their countrywomen of other religious beliefs. As Alexander Pope so aptly put it, "fools rush in where angels fear to tread".

Djennane Kamel Maadi Cairo

Ignored heritage

Sir: In your front page article entitled "Culture for the masses", (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 13-19 June), Rania Khalaf stressed calls for Mrs Mubarak to sponsor a campaign for the preservation of Islamic Cairo. Highlighting the contribution of prominent Islamic figures to Islamic civilization has been included in a campaign for enlightenment. No doubt, cultural and youth centres will take part in fulfilling these basic objectives.

international Zionist movement remains the higher source of authority.

A heated debate continues over this issue in Israel, which may come as a surprise to many in the Arab world, who still tend to believe that the Zionism founded at the beginning of this century is as powerful in Israel as it once was. Zionist Jews in the US still cling to Zionism as the most appropriate framework to mobilise an effective lobby that suits their interests in the US. On the other hand, it is sufficient to observe the conflict in Israel over the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements and the controversy, in the run-up to the elections, over the recent wave of bombings, in order to note that 'Zionism' and any reference to Jews of the Diaspora have no place whatsoever in the bickering and back-biting prevalent among Israel's politicians today.

How can we explain this transition in the relationship between the Zionist movement and Israel? Has Israel really undergone a major transformation? Or has Zionism taken a strategic turn?

The expression "Zionist state" is clearly a contradiction in terms. It is absolutely impossible for a pre-conceived ideology — in this instance, Zionism — to conform with the tangible manifestations of statehood. In this, Israel is no exception to the rule that governs all forms of "doctrinal" states. No sooner was the state of Israel formed than the contradiction began to manifest itself: the state represents primarily the interests of the Jews of Israel, while the Zionist organisation represents the Jews of the Diaspora, particularly in the US. If both sides have been able to transcend the theoretical contradiction in practice, it is because they have reached a certain concordance (not conformity) with regard to their respective interests.

Is this concordance anything new? There has been a real change in the interests of the US, and of US Jews. There has also been a change in the economic interests of Israel, as represented by its citizens.

In contemplating this change, one must take into account the considerable extent to which American and Israeli interests in the region overlap. When we speak of change in the interests of both sides, this is not at all to suggest that an area of shared interests no longer exists. Rather, the issue is whether this area increases or decreases, and to what extent.

In this context, I must caution against two potential pitfalls. The first is the tendency among Arabs to perceive Israel as little more than a tool planted in the region to serve American interests. The danger of this idea is that it strips Israel of any independence as an autonomous entity. This is both incompatible with the facts and counter to Arab interests.

The second, almost the reverse of the first, is the tendency to perceive Israel, or more precisely the Jews of Israel, as the agency that steers the course of US policy by virtue of their control over Jews in the US, who in turn control the American economy, politics and the press. The error in this perception is two-fold. First, it equates American Jews with Israeli Jews in spite of the discrepancy in their respective economic and social realities. Second, it divests the US of its autonomous dynamism, which is also incompatible with the facts and counter to Arab interests.

This said, we can proceed to observe the change that has occurred on both sides. With respect to the US, Israel's importance to American interests in the area reached its height during the period of the Cold War and the no war-no peace situation. One can perhaps sum up the aim of American strategy during that period as "control of the region via Israel". In the wake of subsequent events — the 1973 War, the Camp David accords, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War — one can now sum up the new American objective as "control of the region, including Israel". The era when the US needed Israel to destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactor, for example, is over. Now the US can do this, and more — destroy Iraq in its entirety and rebuild Kuwait — with no need whatsoever to rely on Israel.

As for Israel itself, changes have taken place on four fronts. The first pertains to the composition of the Jewish population of Israel, notably the steady rise in the proportion of Sabras (Jews born in Israel). According to the 1993 census, 60.7 per cent of the Jews in Israel are Sabras. This means, simply, that the majority of Jews in Israel now lack that dual historical experience which characterised the generation that founded the Israeli state. The majority of Jews in Israel no longer share those memories of Nazi oppression that constituted a strong psychological bond between the Jews of Israel and the Jews of Europe. In Israel, there is a new demographic reality. Most of its inhabitants have only experienced "Israeli history". They cannot find within themselves the memories of Jewish suffering which fired the enthusiasm of the Holocaust generation. This applies even to adults, given the increasing proportions of immigrants from Asia, Africa and, more recently, the former Soviet Union.

The second change pertains to Palestine. From 1948 to 1967, Arab political discourse was based on the slogan "the liberation of the whole of Palestine", understood to be the task of all the Arab countries. After 1967, the slogan became "eliminating the effects of Israeli aggression", i.e. returning in the pre-1967 borders. It was only natural that the Palestinians reassess their calculations accordingly. Henceforth, the Palestinians would be directly responsible for solving their own problems. The Palestinians defeated in 1948, too, got the message. They could no longer pin their aspirations on the hope that Arab armies would liberate Palestine one day. In practical terms, this attitude excluded these Arabs from the general arena of politics in Israel and continued to compel others to leave. It soon became apparent, however, that the only recourse was to seek to operate within the context of the "democratic state" — a government for all citizens. As the very antithesis of Zionism, this posed a true quandary for the Israeli government, which has consistently boasted its adherence to the principles of Western democracy.

The third change pertains to the reserves of Jewish migration from abroad. The "Law of Return" was the practical culmination of the Zionist dream to draw all the Jews from the Diaspora to settle in the nascent state. Gradually, the dream evaporated, against the forces that govern all human migrations: from areas of repulsion to areas of attraction, from poverty to wealth, from oppression to security. Israel was not the oasis of prosperity and security for all Jews of the world it set itself up as. Israel manages to attract only a minuscule proportion of Jews from around the world.

The fourth area of change involves the current political peace process, the essence of which rests on two essential and interrelated points. First, it means abandoning the notion of a "Greater Israel" and all historical, religious and ideological doctrine which holds that the West Bank and Gaza are an integral part of the land of Israel. This, however, does not automatically mean abandoning so-called security exigencies, that can be used in negotiations as justification for continued Israeli presence in those areas, on a permanent or a temporary basis. Second, it means abandoning the notion of the "unity of Palestinian national land" and all the historical, religious and ideological doctrine which views Israel in its entirety as an interloper on Palestinian territory. This, in turn, does not at all imply that Palestinian identity must be foregone.

Careful consideration of these two points is sufficient to highlight that the price Israel must pay for peace involves abandoning one of the fundamental principles of Zionism: the concept of the promised land. Palestinians have long been deprived of their hopes of liberating the whole of Palestine, and are now asked to make a settlement tantamount to relinquishing their dream altogether. The Israeli Zionists, on the other hand, in fact achieved a major portion of the Zionist dream when, in June 1967, they occupied all of Palestine as well as the Golan Heights and the Sinai. Suddenly, with the October war of 1973, this reality was shaken. With the return of the Sinai to Egypt in 1982, it began to diminish. And now Israel is in the process of negotiating over territories that by all reckoning lie within the core of the Zionist dream's promised land.

It is impossible to conceive that Zionism can continue to exist if it lacks its traditional components, no matter how it tries to change its guise. But does the weakening of Zionism ultimately mean the end of Israel's hostility toward the Arabs, in that this was fundamental to the concept of Zionism? The answer is not so simple. A quick look at the imminent problem over water resources in the region, the reality of Israel's nuclear arsenal, international pressures to forcibly merge Israel into the region — all of these are sufficient to keep the hostility between Israel and the Arabs alive. This hostility, however, is being governed by new realities, which require the formulation of a new strategy.

The writer is professor of psychology at Ain Shams University and an expert on Israeli and Zionist affairs.

## Soapbox

### Law 93: A silver lining?

In the West the press has become so powerful and influential that those in power cannot dare to entertain even the thought of muzzling or restricting it. And among the first countries of the Arab World to recognise the importance of press freedom we must count Egypt. The press, after all, played an important role in resisting the British occupation, and has honourably battled against corruption and the dictatorship of minority governments.

The Egyptian press has passed through good and bad times. But it has survived all attempts by minority parties to exercise control through toughening penalties against journalists, already subject to a vast quantity of legislation, some of which dates back 70 years and more.

In 1960 the press was nationalised. Journalists were turned into government officials, their role to appease the regime's leading figures. At regular intervals, in 1964, 72 and 81, they were removed from their newspapers and given alternative, menial jobs.

The latest storm the press has had to weather was the issue of Law 93 for the year 1995, toughening penalties that could be imposed against journalists. In the 12 months following the issue of the law 99 journalists have been referred to court under its provisions.

Every cloud, though, has a silver lining. In their struggle to annul this law journalists have engaged in a pattern of sound democratic practice unprecedented in the history of Egypt's professional syndicates. The struggle, though, should not stop at the abrogation of Law 93. It must expand to encompass questions such as the ownership of, and the right to issue, newspapers. Such questions are, after all, at the heart of press freedom.

This week's Soapbox speaker is a member of the council of the Egyptian Press Syndicate.



Magdi Mohanna

## To The Editor

### Nigab controversy

Sir: Regarding the controversy over the *nigab*, I wish to say that, in spite of her assurances to the contrary, it is people like Umm Salahadin (Letters to the editor, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 13-19 June), who do not tolerate the new discourse advocated by Ismail Serageldin and Mohamed Ennara.

In her last paragraph, she writes that she will be happy to provide readers with evidence of her position in favour of the *nigab*. Whenever evidence she may provide, it will neither be from the Qu'ran, nor from the *hadith saheeh*, so I cannot imagine what more authoritative arguments she can offer us.

Her tolerance, she says, stops short of "inaccurate history". I am afraid that she is the one who brings us inaccurate history to support her claim, or more precisely, an inaccurate interpretation of history.

If the *nigab* was worn at different times and in numerous countries, which no one can deny, that certainly does not mean that it was worn in keeping with religious precepts based on the Qu'ran. Until well past the Middle Ages in Europe, women wore a headress much like the *hijab* we see today. In Mediterranean, South American and Asian countries, women, especially peasants, still wear scarves as part of their dress. This does not have any religious connotations.

Of course political and social trends can dictate fashion. If Umm Salahadin has ever watched Egyptian films from the 1930s through the 1970s, or if she has seen any one of the copiers of Umm Kulthum, she will have noticed no *hijabs*, and certainly no *nigabs* in the audience. Could it be that the eminent theologians of the time, like Sheikh Shaltout, or Sheikh El-Maraghi, who both headed Al-Azhar, did not understand the precepts of Islam? Could it be perhaps that their Arabic was not as good as that of Umm Salahadin? She does tell

us that it was her increased knowledge of the language that induced her to go from the *hijab* to the *nigab*.

I don't know who Umm Salahadin's friends are, but I can cite off-hand dozens of Egyptian women in all walks of life who do not wear a *nigab*, and whose strength certainly does not come from a pretty face or figure, but from real intellectual and moral value, education and dedication to their jobs and families. There are also the millions of Muslim women in the fields, factories, offices, banks, you name it, who contribute to the development of their countries, and who do not derive their strength from the way they look, or dress.

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Djennane Kamel Maadi Cairo

Summit for solidarity

Sir: I decided to write to you as soon as I read the lead article in your paper last week ("It takes two to tango", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 13-19 June) on the upcoming Arab summit in Cairo. This summit, as officials declared, aims at two things: regaining Arab unity and supporting the peace process.

News of the summit were met with gratification in the Arab world — a reminder of what we can achieve when we unite, such as the '73 October War.

I write to you to welcome this summit. It is sad, however, that Iraq was not invited to attend, especially as it is a heavyweight Arab country. One can only hope that the summit would be a chance for the whole Arab world to unite and begin a new era, regardless of all the previous problems among some of its countries. When Arabs unite, they became a power to contend with not only in the region, but also worldwide.

Mohamed Fathy Mohamed Suez Canal University Ismailia

## Summer summits

By Salah Montasser

The last comprehensive Arab summit was convened in Cairo on 10 August 1990, following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. In the very same conference hall where the Arab leaders will meet tomorrow, President Mubarak had told the leaders gathered six years ago: "The choice facing us is clear — an effective Arab position that safeguards Arab interests and preserves both Iraq and Kuwait, or a foreign intervention over which we have no say and no control and which will have no interest in preserving the Arabs' existence and their rights. Its guidelines will be the aims and wishes of the powers that support it."

Unfortunately, that summit failed to reach a united and positive stand and left the door open to foreign intervention which, as Hosni Mubarak had predicted, subjected the issue and its solution to its own interests.

The question now is: is the situation today any different from what it was six years ago? At this meeting, photographs of accolades and reconciliation, carried around the world by satellite, are not enough. It is far more important for the Arab leaders to work out the interests of the Arab nation in its confrontation with Israel, which has the definite impression that it has succeeded in splitting the Arab front. It believes that the Arabs have been broken up and scattered, and that it is now easy to deal with each country individually, to the extent that some Arab states are concerned with creating firmer ties with Israel at the expense of inter-Arab relations.

What concerns the Arab nation is whether peace can become a just peace in the true sense, and how to restore Israel's respect for the Arabs, thereby dispelling its illusions that it remains unchallenged in its regional dominance. The Arabs must also establish the best way to assist Syria, Palestine and Lebanon in their confrontation with Israel, and to solve the Arabs' differences — once internal, but now internationalised to such an extent that their resolution is no longer up to the Arabs themselves.

The leaders meeting tomorrow should also search for means to instill new self-confidence in their people. These are some of the main issues which, if not resolved, will allow Israel to dominate the region and Netanyahu to secure undisputed supremacy in the Middle East.



## A woman of infinite variety

Inji El-Kashef remembers Zuzu Nabil, actress and enchantress

THE VOICE and eyes are unlikely ever to be forgotten. Addicts of *Alf Leila Wa Leila* (A Thousand And One Nights) heard her stories for over 30 years, during which Sheherazade always lived till the next day to tell more. But her stories failed to help her survive her illness, and she is gone now. Aziza Imam, known as Zuzu Nabil, passed away on 12 June, leaving behind awards and certificates of merit, the last of which was presented during the Festival of Narrative Films only a week before her death. On that particular occasion she was being honoured for her pioneering role in the Egyptian cinema. Performing in over 50 films, she was one of the foremost and best actresses of her generation. Zuzu Nabil began her career with the Maktar Osman troupe, achieving acclaim in the 1936 production *Dr Yusu*. When, six months later, the troupe went bankrupt, she joined forces with Youssef Wahbi, the leading theatrical impresario of the time. In 1946, with the release of *El-Khamsa Guiney*, her

popularity as a screen actress was confirmed. She was equally at home in classical stage roles, in modern screen dramas, switching with aplomb between colloquial and classical idioms. Zuzu Nabil never limited herself to one particular area. On stage, on the airwaves, before the cameras, she was, almost inevitably, the centre of attention. Always a strong personality, she was the first woman director of the Popular Theatre, a teacher of elocution at the Cinema Institute and one of the first women in Egypt to produce films. Her charisma and incontestable genius aside, whatever the medium, what is owed to Zuzu Nabil is her public's love and respect, Sheherazade's voice with every Ramadan, and her unforgettable eyes.

*Aziza Imam (Zuzu Nabil), actress, born 1920, Sayeda Zeinab, died 13 June, 1996.*

# Horns on the highway

David Blake travels the soundwaves with uncle

Cairo Symphony Orchestra: Favourites (7): Carl Maria Von Weber: *Der Freischütz*; Mozart: *Concerto in C major for flute, harp and orchestra, K.299*; Inas Abdel-Dayem (flute) and Isabelle Courret (harp); Rimsky Korsakov: *Spanish Caprice*, Op. 34; F. Liszt: *Les Préludes*; Youssef El-Sisi, conductor; Main Hall, Cairo Opera House, 13 June

Favourites seven. Loose holiday festival atmosphere with, unfortunately, nothing unseasonal. The opening piece, the overture to *Der Freischütz*, was if anything too loose, too laid back. Not slow but underdeveloped. This is very great Weber, an harbinger of the Romantic upheaval of the 19th century. The opera travels fast through the land of demons and angels and ends with one of those rousing Weberian tunes brought directly from heaven. The horns and brass which open the overture were ragged, recovering too late to bring the gallop of horses from the valleys of thunder and lightning. This music does demand a certain madness and grandeur to give it that extra dimension which was missing.

A certain kind of revelation came with exciting force in the next favourite, Mozart's *C major concerto for flute, harp and orchestra*. No words fit the music, only attempts. *C major* is a very special key. The end of Wagner's *Siegfried*, Beethoven's *7th symphony* and some Bachian resolutions are all *C major* events. No criticism is in order for this performance — merely thanks for pleasures and visions presented.

The two artists, Inas Abdel-Dayem and Isabelle Courret, were made to perform this work. They become one, though

each is different. Courret, looking angelic, played so. Energy, flying fingers, endless varieties of tone and speed, with no effort shown. She seems, like her partner, to become the instrument she plays. Golden arcs of sound span over the theatre. Her pianissimo were delicate, disembody and clearly audible. But most of all the understanding of the music was complete. Could a harp ever sound more alive, noble and beautiful?

As for Abdel-Dayem, her art defies description. There is satisfaction even in watching her prepare to play. Imposing, the Brunhilde of the flute, harmonious, gracious and highly tempered, she conquers before she begins. Then it comes: the phrasing is quite inimitable — so right, pure, with not a trace of mannerism. Mozart's message and the flow of wit demands splash from the instrument and a disregard of all difficulties. Abdel-Dayem positively lets fly one of Mozart's rapturous byrns to sound. And with these two great artists the other Mozartian message — the evanescence of all things earthly — is exactly caught.

What came after stood up bravely enough to these two artists. Firstly, the Rimsky Korsakov *Spanish Caprice*, a party piece, like *Sheherazade*, but without the slicing off of the heads.

All evening the Cairo Symphony had done well enough, but was not up to its highest standard. El-Sisi is a very visual maestro. Apparently he does not do much. He has no tricks, his technique is clear and pointed and his arms are elegantly designed to achieve much with

little. He is urbane, almost airborne. He pays respects to an audience, but goes on further. He is no prude, however: an implied wink to the side shows he knows it all, the scene, dark and light, and the world. Such urbanity presupposes restraint, life, savviness and a conception tailored to fit the model. At times, more is expected of him. He can let loose and allow the orchestra to fizz, but on this night the urbanity stole away the filling and we were left with the dressing. This style is perfectly suited to Kurt Weill's music and an El-Sisi night at the opera would be a ball with the *Seven Deadly Sins*.

Rimsky's *Caprice* blazed on with El-Sisi allowing the thunderous rhythms of the music to stamp out the flamenco like beat. And it was here that *Les Préludes* of Liszt made its visitation to the orchestra, conductor and maestro. It is a big thing, of no name, a naked emperor and quite proudly so.

Liszt is Liszt. Musically, he is the centre of the 19th century and most of the 20th as well. He is music — and a little more. He never goes out of fashion. He is fashion and like *Vogue* magazine and football he goes on forever. Criticism has no truck with him. His uniqueness renders him impervious.

*Les Préludes* was, or is supposed to be, an overture — to what never actually emerged. It all began with a Provençal poem and two composers, Conrad and Raff, who set out to musicalise it. Liszt struck them out and wrote the music himself.

First part *Les Anres*. Second part *La Terre*. Third part *Les Fleurs*. Being Liszt he abided by no rules, making his own as he went along.

*Les Préludes* for some reason became very popular. How the creator of the *Annes de Pélerinage*, the *B minor sonata* and the *Fantasia and Danse* symphonies could ever have turned out this blousy, blotted show is another Liszt mystery. He wrote it along with other works between 1848 and 1878.

There it is: repetitive, bald, over-blown and over-composed. Of anything it has nothing. What he himself thought of it no one knows, but what Wagner, who loved him, thought of it is on record: kitsch. And Liszt's search, totally sincere all his life, was for the new and the improved. *Les Préludes* is like a creaking old kitchen cupboard with no food inside. What El-Sisi thinks of it is conjectural. There are many horn passages. The Cairo Symphony scrambled through them quite well. The first violins, who had done wonders earlier to keep Weber lively, did some instant running repairs on the long string passages of *Les Préludes* which needed the vivacity they alone could give.

The love of Liszt's life, Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, who battled the Pope and her own brother the Czar of Russia to allow her to legitimise her union with Liszt, said: "He has hurled his lance much further into the future than Wagner." What she of all people thought of this broken reed is not known.

Mozart and Weber belonged to a past Liszt had long left behind. A pity such a festival concert could not have given something of Liszt the prophet. As it was, we were left with him walking on the grave.

## Theatre

# Bitter carnival

Nehad Selaiha applauds the first production of a Tagore play in Egypt

In view of the wide and far-reaching popularity of Indian films in Egypt, not to mention the long historical ties between the two nations, it is quite amazing how little the ordinary Egyptian theatre-goer knows about Indian drama. A few years ago when Indian film star Amitabh Bachchan arrived in Cairo for the International Film Festival, he was mobbed at his hotel by hordes of screaming fans. One of them, so overcome with emotion, tore off her veil and promptly fainted. Those young people could easily reel off the full list of Bachchan's films and glibly converse about them: but try popping the name Rabindranath Tagore at any theatre audience and they would look at you blankly, with wide, innocent eyes. "Isn't he some sort of poet?" is probably the best answer you could hope for.

In the sixties Tagore was better known in Egypt. India's celebration of the centenary of his birth in 1961 had its repercussions here. Numerous articles in the press focused on the life of the man and his work. In most of these, however, the accent fell heavily and almost exclusively on his poetry — understandably, perhaps, since it was a book of poems (*Gitanjali* or *An Offering of Songs*, as the poet himself called it in English) which won him the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. If his dramatic works (which number over fifty and span a period of almost 60 years) got any mention at all, it was usually cursory and adumbrated. In these days, when literary translation was booming and theatre offered a wide-ranging miscellany of texts, one would have expected Arabic versions of at least some of Tagore's plays, and even a production. Unfortunately, only one play, *The Post Office* (Dakaghar, 1913) was translated into Arabic, though the project to produce it at the Pocket Theatre soon evaporated.

It took 35 years since interest in Tagore began to bring one of his plays to the Egyptian stage. Not surprisingly, it was a young, newly formed experimental group who accomplished this

feat. Last week, at the permanent home of *Al-Ghad* (Tomorrow) Theatre company, a newly built elegant chamber theatre, adjacent to The Ballroom, Tagore's *Raja* (or *The King of the Dark Chamber*, 1910) opened. Like most of the great poet's well known plays, it is a difficult, challenging text, heavily weighted with symbolism. Like his great Irish contemporary and fellow Nobel Prize-winner, William Butler Yeats (whose plays are fitted with a similar neglect in Egypt), Tagore strove after an original and authentic dramatic mode that could accommodate the lyrical and mystical side by side with the dramatic, incorporate song, dance and mime as organic elements, and, above all, dramatise the 'activity of the souls of the characters', in Yeats's words, and 'the rushing journey of the soul'.

Curiously, at about the same point in their careers, both poets developed an intense interest in music, movement and ritual; the result, in each case, was a series of symbolic dance dramas, or 'plays for dancers' as Yeats chose to call them. In this area, however, Tagore was at an advantage: while Yeats restricted himself to the style of the fourteenth-century Japanese Noh drama he discovered in 1916 (combining it with various Christian and other supernatural themes in verse plays like *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919), *Calvary* (1920), *The Cat and the Moon* (1925) and *The Resurrection* (1934), among others, Tagore had a vast store of indigenous forms of theatre and a long tradition of Sanskrit classical drama and Bengali folk-drama on which to draw. Unlike Yeats, he did not have to struggle against the conventions of Western-style picture-frame staging and could freely choose whatever aspect of Western drama suited his work.

*Chitrangada* (1936), a re-

working of an earlier verse drama called *Chitra* (1892) is, perhaps, Tagore's best-known dance drama. Its central theme is the meaning of physical and spiritual beauty in the relationship between man and woman. The same theme informs *The King of the Dark Chamber*, written some 18 years after *Chitra*. The recurrence of the theme at different stages of Tagore's life reveals an intense, life-long preoccupation with it. This is not surprising in a man who was also a philosopher, who called the educational institution he founded in 1901 the 'abode of peace' (*Shanti Niketan*), who lived ascetically and celebrated his way of life in a play called *The Ascetic* (*Sanyasi*), and who as early as 1890, when he was only 29, portrayed sacrifice, in a play that bears this name, as a ritual propitiation, and death as a triumph.

In *The King of the Dark Chamber* the questioning of the true meaning of beauty acquires a pronounced mystical dimension, achieved through a deliberate and systematic subversion of our traditional notions of light and darkness. All the elements of the drama — the lively, suspenseful plot, the bustling action, the intrigue, the songs, the carnival that turns bitter and the many role-reversals — move in the same direction, and the final message is unmistakable: true beauty cannot be found in the outward shows of this world, in the deceptive play of light and shadow; it has to be sought at the heart of darkness.

In tackling *The King* (translated somewhat awkwardly by Abdel-Ghani Dawoud and Ahmed Abdel-Fattah), director Samih Migahid had to bear in mind the logistics of *Al-Ghad* company and make do with a relatively small cast. This entailed some cuts, some doubling by the actors, some merging of characters and the excision of others.

But neither logistics nor the number of the cast had anything to do with the startling reduction of the king to a mere voice-over, and the voice of a young woman at that. One could easily see the director's point in removing the king physically from the scene: the king in the play, despite his spiritual superiority, is too ugly to look at and always shrouds himself in darkness whenever he meets his beautiful queen; and since it is easier to imagine spiritual beauty in the absence of an unsightly physical presence, the director saw fit to remove it. But giving the king a female voice, a kind of androgynous domination and confusing his gender in the name of 'spiritualising' him was going a bit too far. Still, it was a teasing and exciting proposition, particularly in view of the production's policy of playing up the religious and mystical aspects of the text at the cost of the romantic ones. By the end of the performance the king has been metaphorically built up into some kind of omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent deity; to hear this invisible deity speak with a female voice would thrill any feminist; but since director Samih Migahid would not have him (her?) rejoin the queen in a final, romantic reconciliation in which physicality and spirituality are held in perfect equipoise — as Tagore intended — he replaced the scene with a choral confessional prayer in which all the characters join.

Migahid's interpretation and many alterations are bound to arouse a lot of controversy. Some will say that the play has gained in focus, concentration and spiritual impact because of them; others may judge that they have adulterated Tagore's vision and twisted it out of all recognition. Few, however, will dispute the technical proficiency of the production. In this respect, the flexible seating arrangement of *Al-*

Ghad Theatre and the audience's comfortable swivel-chairs were an asset. You can seat the audience anywhere you like and set up your performance area, or areas, wherever you choose. It is a free space, capable of being shaped and reshaped infinitely without losing the value of intimacy. Such a free space was crucial for a performance that required bare platforms, multiple settings, the minimum of highly symbolic props and, above all, room for movement.

For this production director Migahid chose to seat his audience on the two long sides of the triangular hall, creating a kind of traverse theatre. On either end of the hall were raised platforms, fitted with minimal symbolic scenery, representing several locales. In the middle passage way, traversing the area between the audience's seats, a black, lionelike figure representing the king's dark character, and edged with burning white light, gave way to an empty, uncoloured area that signified the crossing of all borders — physical and spiritual. The acting was generally good and highly disciplined, but could have done with a touch of stylisation. The weakest point in this respect was Samir Wahid's performance of the crucial part of the clown who masquerades as the king in the early carnival scenes; his antics were belaboured and heavy-handed, and at times it felt as if he was bludgeoned into it. Another feeble element was the choreography of the dances, which was lacklustre and embarrassingly naive. But the most damaging element of all was the music; Walid El-Shahawi's recorded score, though good in itself, was light years removed from the atmosphere of the play. A few percussion instruments, played live, would have done the job more efficiently. Still, on balance, the rewards of the evening far outnumbered its disappointments. At the very least Tagore has finally been added to the repertoire of the Egyptian theatre.

## Listings

### EXHIBITIONS

**Ceramics Biennale**  
Art Centre, 1 El-Masrah El-Sayid St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Youssef Mamlook (Paintings)**  
Art Centre, 1 El-Masrah El-Sayid St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Slovenian Graphics**  
Al-Hanager, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Group Exhibition (Paintings)**  
Art Centre, 1 El-Masrah El-Sayid St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Maged Abdel-Razek & Fakhry Othman (Paintings)**  
Art Centre, 1 El-Masrah El-Sayid St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Barbara Graf & Sadiey Niederberger**  
Art Centre, 1 El-Masrah El-Sayid St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Galil Abdel-Hay, Emma Shahn**  
Art Centre, 1 El-Masrah El-Sayid St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Jehan Raouf, Samah El-Bahary**  
Art Centre, 1 El-Masrah El-Sayid St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil**  
Art Centre, 1 El-Masrah El-Sayid St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Egyptian Museum**  
Tahrir St, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Coptic Museum**  
Tahrir St, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Islamic Museum**  
Tahrir St, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Museum of Modern Egyptian Art**  
Tahrir St, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 20 June.

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**French Films**  
French Cultural Centre, Madinet Nasr. Tel 354 7679. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Les Misérables II**  
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French Cultural Centre, Madinet Nasr. Tel 354 7679. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 20 June.

**Coppy Cat**  
Kartoum II, 15 Ennasraddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 20 June.

**White You Were Sleeping**  
Kartoum II, 15 Ennasraddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 20 June.

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## Around the galleries



Spirit of place: to coincide with this week's Durrell conference Hala Halim examines the precarious future of the house once occupied by Durrell, while Hoda El-Sadda reviews a critical study on the *Personal Landscape* poets

## Deconstructing monuments

Hala Halim traces the twists of fate that obscure the future of the houses where Lawrence Durrell and Effat Nagui once lived

Ten months after a large-scale campaign for the preservation of two houses in Alexandria that bear witness to the city's social and cultural history, signs of official interest remain promising, though on more than one.

The threat of demolition posed to much of Alexandria's architectural heritage is all the more reprehensible in the case of the property that once belonged to the Ambroses, an Italian Alexandrian family. In addition to the wider cultural significance of the two buildings the main Ambrosian mansion housed, during the second world war, British novelist Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990), while the atelier in the garden was for her last 30 years the residence of artist Effat Nagui (1905-1994).

In May 1995 the Ambroses sold the property on 19 Al-Mamoun Street to a construction company, *Al-Sharika Al-Arabiya Lil-Istithmarat Al-Aghariya*. Given its location in the once smart, notably Jewish, but now popular quarter of Muharram Bey, the large property was a potentially lucrative investment, providing sufficient land for the construction of residential tower blocks.

In this and similar cases in Alexandria the impediment that faces constructors is the decree issued a few years ago by the governor, prohibiting the demolition of villas as well as buildings of historical distinction, an impediment construction companies circumvent by illegal demolition late at night, ensuring whenever possible that what remains of the structure the following morning will be beyond restoration. After the fact, the meagre fine for breaching the law is settled and construction begins.

This pattern would have been repeated with the ex-Ambrosian property had it not been for the presence of antiquities in the garden. But by the time the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) placed the property under its temporary guardianship last August, the roof and part of the upper storey of the Effat Nagui atelier had been demolished and the marble balustrade of the main staircase to the mansion vandalised. Meanwhile, a campaign for the preservation of the ex-Ambrosian property was spearheaded by a number of non-governmental organisations through letters of appeal sent to the president's office and various ministries.

The campaigners involved were Mohamed Awad of the Alexandria Preservation Trust, Adel Abu Zahra of the Friends of the Environment Association and Nawal Hassan of the Centre for Studies of Egyptian Civilization, as well as individuals acting on their own initiative. The work of the NGOs was paralleled by a media campaign, both locally and internationally. But while the ministries of culture and tourism responded by dispatching committees to look into the matter, the SCA had removed most of the antiquities, leaving the premise unguarded — an ironical move, in view of the fact that the SCA is an organ of the Ministry of Culture.

While SCA guards were on the premises, Ali Abu Zeid Ibrahim, chairman of the board of the construction company stated that there were no demolition plans, that in fact his company intended to turn the two houses into schools. The lawyer of the company, Hish Khamis, after the departure of the SCA guards, asserted that the main Ambrosian mansion would be turned into the company's headquarters while the Effat Nagui atelier and surrounding structures like the garage would be demolished and replaced by a number of residential towers with an inner courtyard, accommodating part of the garden.

Throughout, the company flatly denied responsibility for the demolished roof of the atelier, claiming that it was already in a dilapidated condition when purchased. Their claims are thrown into question by Onsi Nagui, Effat's nephew, who testifies that the house was in habitable condition when his aunt died. Furthermore, officials at Alexandria's Central District, under whose jurisdiction the property falls, have confirmed that the company has twice been fined for illegal demolition.

The past few decades have seen a transition in cultural identity, one that makes it necessary when calling for the preservation of edifices of cosmopolitan Egypt to restore to them their associations. It is this rift, compounded by the dearth, at least in Arabic, of documentation on cosmopolitan Alexandria's social and cultural history, that allowed the construction company's lawyer to claim that Durrell's tenancy of the Ambrosian mansion was no more than a figment of local folklore.

His argument was based on the assertion that Durrell, being British, could not possibly have resided in the "house of an Italian family during the second world war". This reasoning does not hold. The full name of Durrell's Italian landlord was Aldo Ambrosio Isaac. The Ambroses were Sephardic Jews.

They were an artistic bunch. Aldo, a civil engineer, was a patron of the arts. His wife, Amelia, was a portraitist, as was her daughter Gilda. The atelier in the garden was built for Amelia's use. It was from the son, Emilio, also a painter and sculptor, now resident in Florence, that Effat Nagui rented the atelier.

As to Durrell, according to Ian MacNiven's forthcoming biography: "By December 1943 Larry [Durrell] had moved [to] the Ambrosian residence at 19 Rue Al-Mamoun in the Muharram Bey sector."

It has been argued that the ambience of Alexandrian mansions in *The Quartet* was inspired by Durrell's sojourn at the Ambrosian house. It may also have been through Amelia or Gilda that he first met Clea Badaro (1913-1968) — though in the memoir by Badaro's sister the suggestion is made that Durrell was a chance acquaintance who had dropped by her atelier one day.

It is satisfying to discover that Durrell and Effat met, as revealed in the diary of Durrell's trip to Egypt in 1977 kept by Peter Adam. In the entry for 18 October Adam records that: "The rumour that the famous Lawrence Durrell is in town has spread. The lady who owns the house has invited a few local celebrities to meet him. Larry doesn't want to go but is too polite and too much of a social coward to refuse." Effat's tenancy obviously misled Adam into believing she was the landlady of the Ambrosian property. In any case, Effat's presence was not as tedious as "Larry" had dreaded, as indicated in Adam's entry the following day: "Durrell's hostess from last night, a stunningly beautiful woman, a mix of Anais Nin and Isak Dinesen, lets us into a drawing room filled with her own paintings. She knew 'Clea'."

Adam's impressions of Effat confirm those of her Alexandrian acquaintances who invariably found her company



Top, clockwise: the atelier in the garden of the Ambrosian mansion, where Effat Nagui worked (photo courtesy of Asmaa El-Bakry); Durrell climbs the steps of the tower (photo courtesy of Manos Harilaos); Clea Badaro's portrait of Durrell, loaned by Mohamed Awad, which will be exhibited at the Cecil Hotel

uplifting. With her husband Saad El-Khadem, a pioneer of folkloric studies, Effat kept an open house, a kind of informal artist salon, much in the way that Amelia Ambrosio had, though with a different ambience.

The preservation of Egypt's social and cultural heritage was an integral part of Effat Nagui and her husband's life work, a fact that makes the threatened demolition of the atelier all the more tragic.

There is little to report by way of official commitment to the conservation of the ex-Ambrosian property. Campaigners have long since proposed that the Ambrosian mansion be turned into a museum and research centre on 19th and 20th century Alexandria, housing Awad's collection of engravings, paintings and sketches of the city, including Clea Badaro's portrait of Durrell. It has been suggested that the atelier could be utilised as a gallery-cum-culture centre, refurbished with Effat's works and collections which her nephew is willing to donate. And allowing the intensive campaign of last August, the issue has been examined by officials.

In response to a request from the Ministry of Culture the SCA established two committees to examine the possibility of listing the buildings. Unfortunately the SCA does not appear to have a mandate over such early 20th century edifices as the Ambrosian mansion which, though "not an outstanding example of the eclectic neo-Baroque style", in the words of Awad, makes claim to preservation through its socio-cultural history. Not surprisingly, from

the perspective of an SCA committee made up of archaeologists and engineers rather than experts on Alexandria's literary and social history, no reasons were found to preserve the property. Fortunately the Ministry of Culture has since instigated a committee better qualified to evaluate the issue, which includes the artist Adam Henein, the head of the Museum Sector, Ahmad Nawar, and professor of architecture Mustafa Sonbol.

In a recent interview Henein commented: "With its original architecture and garden the property carries a whiff of old Alexandria... the fact that it is the last bastion of old Alexandria in an area that has changed completely is all the more reason to preserve it. We all agreed on that. In the report, we recommended that the property be preserved by the SCA and Ministry of Culture, and turned into a museum as well as a cultural centre."

Meanwhile Nirvana Khader, of the Social Development Fund, has attempted to endorse the committee findings. She is optimistic that the Fund, working in tandem with the Ministry of Culture, and calling on foreign donors such as the European Union and UNESCO, could develop the ex-Ambrosian property into a museum and vocational training centre.

Ten months after the instigation of a campaign to save the buildings, then, the promise remains that two buildings at the juncture of Alexandria's modern history — cosmopolitan and Egyptian — might be safeguarded. But in ten months more, will such promises have borne fruit?

### Books

## Dexterously disentangled

"Many Histories Deep": the *Personal Landscape* poets in Egypt, 1940-45, Roger Bowen, London: Associated University Presses, 1995

Between 1940 and 1945 Cairo witnessed an interesting influx of English poets, writers and painters who came with the British army to take part in the North African campaign or who had been forced to flee from Greece after the invasion of the islands. Military circumstance brought John Fraser, Keith Douglas, John Cromer, Hish Henderson, John Galsworthy, Ian Fletcher, Erik de Mauny, John Waller, Dan Davin — to mention some of the more prominent figures. Arriving on a steamship from Greece came Olivia Manning with her husband R.D. Smith, Harold Edwards and some Greeks, notably the young poets George Sefertis and Elie Papadimitriou. They were soon joined by Lawrence Durrell, who had not been notified of the evacuation in time, and had had to escape to Crete with his wife and baby daughter on an open cable whence he was shipped to Egypt. There they caught up with a few friends who had left Greece before the invasion. Robin Fedden who had resigned his post as cultural attaché in the Athens legation, and Bernard Spencer, who had been attached to the British Council at Salonika. In Cairo they took up various jobs and moved in different circles.

Roger Bowen's book recalls an almost forgotten literary history associated with Egypt. The poets who found themselves on Egyptian soil produced work which is largely ignored, or at least not fully incorporated, in the canon of English literature of the second world war. He concentrated on the *Personal Landscape* group of poets while drawing upon the bulk of work produced by other poets, novelists and artists. *Personal Landscape* was a literary magazine created by a group of these exiled English civilians who found themselves in Egypt during the war. They met at the Anglo-Egyptian Union, a club for Englishmen and Egyptians with an interest in literature and other arts. In practice, and as Robin Fedden recalls,

very few Egyptians actually came to the club except for one or two such as George Henein.

The founder members of the magazine were Bernard Spencer, Lawrence Durrell and Robin Fedden, who had all had positions in Greece, where they met before their arrival in Egypt. Between 1942 and 1945 the group succeeded in bringing out eight issues. They eventually accepted work by officers in the army, for example Keith Douglas and G.S. Fraser. Members of the group were united in exile, a condition of "stagnation" as Fedden described it. On the whole, the English exiles lived in an isolated world. In their eyes, Egypt was a "lurel city", rampant with contradictions and extreme conditions; all the pleasures and comfort of peace were proffered on the doorstep of a devastating war. Cairo's unrelenting and total decadence were over-emphasised in the writings that came out of the Middle East.

Revisiting the battle site at Al-Alamein, Roger Bowen sets the tone to his brilliant recapturing of a moment in history. He puts his finger on a basic incongruity in the scene. The British war memorials are strewn with bougainvillea, roses and other flowering shrubs; but "the desolation beyond the walls will invoke Hardy's *Drummer Hodge*. As Bowen remarks, "this is both a memorial to empire and an invocation of a native pastoral; foreign soil is made England, a garden is tended".

Bowen's text is situated between the myths about the desert war which dominates the representation of this period in history and the imperial or colonial theme. According to him, all the writers under discussion "participated, to varying degrees, in that discourse [of empire] as they struggled to come to terms with their Near East". On the other hand their contribution, again Bowen maintains, cannot be simply classified as just another expression of Empire and finds in Durrell's *Quartet*, for example, "traces of a post-colonial discourse".

Bowen represents his wartime poets, the *Personal Landscape* group in particular, as caught up in a conflict between exile and empire. On the one hand they were heirs to a tradition of colonialist assumptions of superiority which allowed them to discover, colonise and control Oriental otherness. Travellers, writers and administrators had played out their Occidental dreams in the malleable theatrical space of the Orient. When Olivia Manning arrived in Egypt, she felt that everything was "suffocatingly familiar". On the other hand, these English writers and poets did not bring with them "the same swagger or the same assumptions of their nineteenth and early twentieth century forebears. They had less freedom and less space to discover or romanticise. They were reluctant travellers and Egypt was not their chosen destination. It is within this context that Roger Bowen reads the poetry written by the *Personal Landscape* group of poets. In many ways, their rejection of and hostility towards their exile in Egypt was the exterior manifestation of their own interior exile.

Bowen's chapter on Durrell is especially interesting. Due to Durrell's reputation and literary standing, more attention has been given to the "Orientalist" aspects of his work. Mahmoud Al-Manzawlawi was the first to challenge Durrell's representation of Alexandria and point out his many borrowings from "Orientalist" texts. In his article "Curate's Egg: An Alexandrian Opinion of Durrell's *Quartet*", (*Endeavour* 15:2 April-June 1962), he sets out to prove that Durrell's representation of Alexandria is based on falsehoods and preconceived orientalist ideas. To remember Edward Said, "the Orient was almost a European invention and has been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences".

Bowen acknowledges the tradition of European writers, travellers and artists who re-discovered Egypt. Everybody did it and so did Robin Fedden. Durrell and the rest of the *Personal Landscape* group. He notes that Durrell, in particular, was an assiduous "borrower and a revivalist". He points out that "Flaubert's *Notes de Voyage en Orient*, with its embrace of decay, of the grotesque and macabre, could be seen as a model for a number of episodes and encounters in the *Quartet*".

However, Bowen argues that despite the obvious commonalities between Durrell's representation of Alexandria and the Orientalist, imperialist discourse of empire, there is a crucial difference between the two. "If Orientalist discourse is a form of political control, of knowing, compartmentalising, and structuring an alien culture... then Durrell's participation is more often ironic, self-conscious, and playful." This is born out by the fact that "not knowing" is the chief preoccupation in the *Quartet*, that all the sources are deemed unreliable and the whole inquiry is never completed. Durrell was aware that the event of the war, which coincided with a rising nationalism, signalled the end of an era and a way of life. "The *Quartet* becomes an epitaph for a lost world, for a political and aesthetic balance of a power no longer in place."

"The West writes" the East and is at the same time forced to record its own decline. Postwar Egyptian history, and the postwar erosion of Britain's imperial profile, give these novels a resonance that is at once elegiac and ironic. *Many Histories Deep* moves in this precarious space between discourse of empire and discourses on empire. Layers of histories are sensitively and dexterously disentangled and the reader manages to get yet another view of a highly complex literary and cultural encounter.

Reviewed by Hoda El-Sadda

### Durrell Conference: programme

23 June

Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research, 163 Horreya Ave.  
9am-10am: Opening with conference director, Soud Hassan Sobhy, University of Alexandria, programme director, James R. Nichols. George Southern University, Zephaniah Rasaf, Asmaa Amer and Dana Samir Abu Ali, University of Alexandria. Keynote address by Editor El-Chamri: "Alexandria: Images of the City of Saffron in Literature".  
11am-11.30am: Presentation by Mohamed Awad "The Durrell House in Muharram Bey".  
11.30am-12.45pm: Hall: Alexandria Perspectives on Durrell, moderator Soud Hassan Sobhy.  
Fama Mahmoud: "Durrell's Alexandria, Tairaks Drifting City, and the Alexandria of Egyptian Novelists", Mary MF. Massoud: "Malifrouz: A Poem to a Poet in Massoud: 'Malifrouz'". Hanna Hassan Ali: "Durrell's *Quartet*".  
Room A: Alexandria in Durrell's Imagination, moderator James R. Nichols.  
Hala Makram Shorouk: "Alexandria in Durrell's Eyes Through a Critical Reading of *The Quartet*", Joseph A. Boone: "Quizzing the *Quartet*", Alexandria and Egypt in the Western Heuristic Imagination, Roger Bowen: "Squid With Joy: Scobie, Tendencies and The Contact Zone".

24 June

Hotel Cecil.  
9am-11.15am, Hall: To Be A King Of Islands, moderator Anna Lillios, University of

Central Florida.  
Keynote: "Objects in Space and Time: Memory in Durrell's *Quartet*", moderated by George Henein. Durrell's Creation of Landscape and Character in *Quartet*, Adrian Barlow: "Tiresias and The Sighless Stone Woman: Durrell, TS Eliot and Reflections on A Midwinter Voyage".  
Room A: Alexandria: City of Memory and Meaning, moderator Richard pine, Dublin University.  
Soud Hassan Sobhy: "Alexandria as Grid: Durrell's 'It', Corinne Alexandre-Garnier: "Alexandria: Passage or Origin?".  
10.30am-11.30am, Hall: Key Presentation, moderator Corinne Alexandre-Garnier, Jacques Housson, Paris.  
11.45am-1pm, Hall: Durrell's Poetry: Reading and Discourse, moderator, Richard pine.  
Room A: "Durrell's East Mediterranean Poetry" David Radwicz, Eastern Illinois University. Virginia Kirby-Smith Connors: "On Marble Threshing-floors: Classical Myth in Durrell's Poetry", Malik Hashem: "The Language of Exile in Durrell's Alexandria", Patrick McInnes: "Durrell and The Personal Landscape Poets in English Poetry".  
Room A: City of Creeds, moderator John M. Rose, Goucher College.  
Alice Hughes: "Spirit of Place, Spiritual Place: The Durrells in the spiritual city beneath the temporal one", Suzanne Henig: "The Elements of The Cabala in The Alexandria Quartet", Richard A. Hood: "Contrast, Relativity, and The Alexandria Quartet".  
Room B: Durrell and Other Writers, moderator Emma El-Kamouny, University of Alexandria.  
Azma MH El-Kholi: "Justice and The Blythedale Romance: Where Durrell and Hawthorne Meet on Common Ground".

Margot Badran: "Gender, Nation, and The Empire in The Alexandria Quartet and in *Wings of Agor* in Alexandria, The Memoirs of Walida Wassef: A Comparative Inquiry", Abdalla Sorour: "Durrell's influence on Arabic Literature".

25 June

Hotel Cecil.  
9am-10am, Hall: Key Presentation: Durrell in Egypt, moderator Hala Y. Halim, Al-Ahram, American University in Cairo, Ian S. MacNiven, SUNY Maritime College, Muriel Said El-Dia, Al-Ahram, Cairo.  
10.15am-11.30am, Hall: Gender Roles in The Alexandria Quartet, moderator Joseph A. Boone.  
Shelly Eshim: "Subverting The Female Body: The Body Politics of Durrell's Alexandria Quartet", Pauline Beard: "The Whore Among Cities and Her Sick Solitary, Sexually-Wounded Man", Helen Wussow: "Women and The Sea in The Alexandria Quartet".  
Room A: Durrell's Stagecraft, moderator George B. Dorell, Goucher College.  
Keith Cushman: "Sympathy With The Devil: Durrell's Irish Fantasy", Joan W. Pinkney: "Post War and Postmodernism: An Historic Look at Durrell's Play", Hala Y. Halim: "Ossama El-Aref and Lawrence Durrell".  
Room B: Literary Theory and Structure, moderator Lawrence B. Garachne, University of Ottawa.  
Earl G. Ingels: "The Postmodernism of The Alexandria Quartet", Linda Sump Rashid: "Translating Reality: Linguistic Structures in The Alexandria Quartet", C. Ravindran Nambiar: "The Culture Hero and The Boom-Bang: A Study of The Char-

acter Affair".  
11.45am-1pm, Hall: Myth and The God-Dess, moderator Jane Eblen Keller, University of Baltimore.  
Carol Peirce: "Breathing Myth Into Character: Some Reflections on Durrell and Nin", Emma El-Kamouny: "Blindfold Aphrodite and Time in The Alexandria Quartet", James R. Nichols: "The Mother Figure in Durrell's Novels".  
Room A: The Imagined Landscape of Alexandria, moderator Aleya Abdel-Salam Said, University of Alexandria.  
Nabil M. Abdel-Al: "The Spirit of Place in Durrell vs. Foster", Marie-Rose Logan: "Alexandria in Contemporary French Fiction: The Work of Pascal Quignard", Mona Henig: "Constructing 'The Search for a Centre of Gravity in The Literature and Lives of Anais Nin and Lawrence Durrell'".  
Room B: Currents Within The Quartet, moderator Marie Elise Jean, University of Lyon II.  
Anne R. Zahlan: "Crossing The Border: Durrell's Alexandria Farewell to Modernism", Anna Teyf: "The Myth of The Mutation of Character and Setting in The Alexandria Quartet", Nabil Sweden: "De Sade's and De Rel's Justice".  
6.30pm-7.45pm, Room A: Writing About Durrell: An Open Discussion, moderator Patrick Quinn, Nene College.  
Roger Bowen: "Constructing 'Many Histories Deep': The Personal Landscape Poets in Egypt, 1940-45", Richard Pine: "Creating Lawrence Durrell: The Mindscape".

26 June

Hotel Cecil.  
9am-10am, Hall: Mapping Durrell's Thought — Old Questions, New In-

sights: A Panel Discussion, introducer Carol Peirce.  
John M. Rose: "Durrell and Placisms: Mapping The City, Mapping Life", Richard Schumaker: "Durrell Between Foucault and Fukuyama: The Question of (Anti-) Humanism".  
10.15am-11.30am, Hall: The Paris Circle, moderator Susan S. MacNiven, SUNY Maritime College.  
Jane Eblen Keller: "A Strange Brotherhood of Saints: Georges Simenon and Henry Miller", Joe Braucher III: "Prospero and Caliban on Vacation: A Stylistic Comparison of Durrell's *Prospero's Cell* and Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi*", Jean L. Bradford: "A Multiplicity of Selves: The Search for a Centre of Gravity in The Literature and Lives of Anais Nin and Lawrence Durrell".  
Room A: Durrellian Echoes in The Postmoderns, moderator Earl G. Ingels, Brockport SUNY College.  
Charles I. Sligh: "Reading The Divergent Waves: Durrell, Corraux, and The Reader in The N-Dimensional Novel", John Maynard: "Do Desert Ground: Durrell's *Shadow*", Sahar Hammoud: "The Figure of The Capt in Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* and Edward El-Kharri's *Alexandria Trilogy*".  
Room B: Durrell Among The Poets, moderator Brewster Chamberlin, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.  
James A. Brigham: "City Full Of Dreams: Durrell's Alexandria and The Ghost of Brudelair", Anna Lillios: "Alexandrian Mirages: Durrell's and Cavafy's Refracted Views of The City", Ian Firla: "Affectionate Graves" and Durrell's

Notions of The "True Poet".  
11.45am-1pm, Hall: The Lesser Known Durrell, moderator David Rosenthal, Athens Gennadius Library.  
Patrick Quinn: "Down Into The Labryinth and Beyond The Ego", Nicholas Moskavakis: "Kassimbilla, Durrell, and St. John", James M. Decker: "Durrell's Venerable Baedeker: Locating The Spirit in 'Elegy on The Closing of The French Brouille'".  
Room A: Worlds Within The Avignon Quartet, moderator Susan Vander Closter, Rhode Island School of Design.  
Paul H. Lorenz: "'O World Of Little Mirrors in The Light': El-Kheima in The Avignon Quartet", Annick Durand: "The Cypriot: Rehearsal on A Theme Of Durrell's Iconography", Dianne L. Vipond: "Virtual Persona (lily): Stereoscopic Character in Lawrence Durrell's Avignon Quartet".  
Room B: Egypt in The Alexandria Quartet, moderator Anne R. Zahlan: "Mona Monks: 'Limitations of Vision': The Egyptian People in Durrell's Alexandria Quartet", Rosalind Ward Gwynne: "Islam And Muslims in The Alexandria Quartet", Sherry Lutz Zivley: "Coptic Christianity in Durrell's Alexandria Quartet".

27 June

Hotel Cecil.  
9am-10am, Hall: Durrell's Unfinished Novel 'A Village Of Turtle-Doves', The Story of New Gournah, Egypt, introducer James R. Nichols.  
Omar El-Hakim: "Hassan Fathy — An Enigmatic Architect", Gerald L. Vincem:

### Plain Talk

I was heartened to receive a note from Magda Mohieddin, manager of examinations at the British Council, about the great academic achievements of our students in the IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education). This certificate is offered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and gives access to Egyptian universities. At the same time, it can be used as a springboard for entry to a bridging course for those wishing to study at a British University.

This year over 3,000 students in Egypt are currently sitting for the examinations, which, incidentally, are taking place in the great hall of Kasr El-Aini Hospital.

According to this note, Egyptian candidates consistently achieve a very high percentage of pass marks. The IGCSE is offered in over 100 countries and the results in 1995 were probably the best ever for Egypt. The UCLES reported that "The proportion of candidates awarded grades A+ or A in mathematics and science subjects was much higher than elsewhere. For example, in IGCSE Physics, 17.5 per cent of Egyptian candidates were awarded A+ compared to 5 per cent for others. Out of a global total of 2,298 candidates for A/S Mathematics (the majority of whom were British) 36 were awarded full marks; 27 of these candidates were Egyptian. Of the two candidates scoring highest marks in A/S Biology, one was British, the other Egyptian. Four of the top 10 candidates in 'A' level literature came from Egypt."

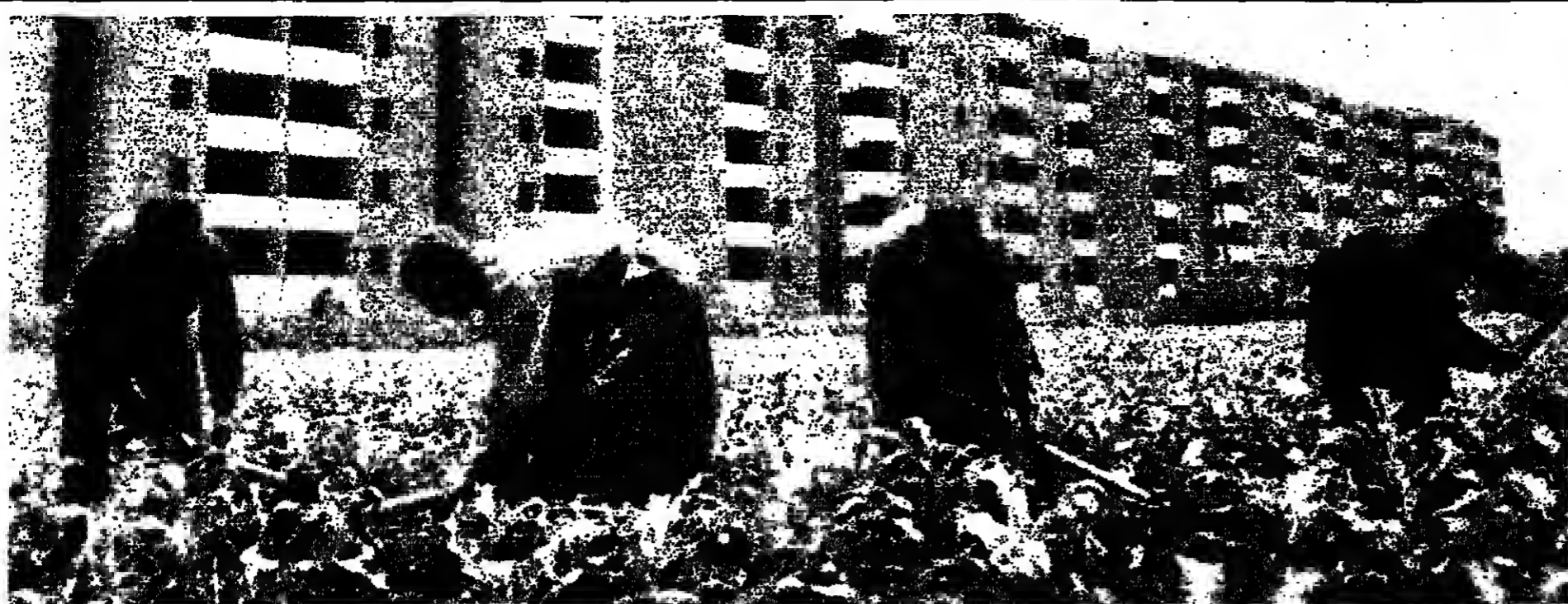
Under the terms of a protocol between the Ministry of Education, UCLES and the British Council, schools wishing to offer the IGCSE are inspected to ensure they have the necessary human and material resources to fulfil the curriculum.

The IGCSE examinations this year are coinciding with an on-going debate about the pros and cons of language schools and the teaching of foreign languages. A confrontation — almost a battle — is going on between those who support the language schools, underlining the importance of learning foreign languages, and those who believe that language schools undermine the national identity and that foreign languages should be taught at a later stage in order not to be learned at the expense of Arabic.

The National Specialised Councils are currently discussing these issues — the Education Council from a teaching angle and the Council for Culture and Information within a cultural context. One thing, however, is clear: those students who have scored high marks in IGCSE exams serve as an example of the achievements of language schools and their ability to compete with international educational institutions.

From the cultural point of view there is no doubt that learning a foreign language is more than just a linguistic achievement. It opens up new horizons, helps to enrich one's life and increases the understanding of other cultures. An examination of our literary history reveals that writers who have enriched our culture are those who have mastered a foreign language and have been able to imbibe from its rich sources. One can think of Taha Hussein, Tawfik El-Hakim, Yehia Haqqi, Salama Moussa and Hussein Fawzi, each of whom contributed to our cultural wealth. These great figures excelled in producing Arabic works of the highest standards.

Mursi Saad El-Din



Encroaching on agricultural land or building in the desert, which option will solve the problem of 600,000 new families a year?

photo: Randa Shaath

# Last and maybe least

Wagdi Riad reports from Istanbul on the fiery debates of Habitat II's last session and its final disappointing declaration

Heated debates on unresolved issues have extended Habitat II's closing session until the early hours of Saturday 15 June. The session which started on Thursday morning with a debate over a proposal presented by Arab delegates referring to the occupation by foreign powers and the creation of settlements by those occupying powers in old cities — in a clear reference to the city of Jerusalem — has ended on Saturday at dawn with Arab delegates withdrawing their proposal after Turkish mediation. This was the longest session in the history of UN conferences. Since it ran against the UN conference charter which stipulates that the declaration should be announced no later than Friday midnight, Shafiq Kalkhalil had to stop the clock at 11.59 until the conference finally came to a close.

Following a week of bargaining in which several unresolved issues pitted countries of the north and the south against each other, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT), the last UN mega-conference of this century, released the Istanbul Declaration and the 21st Agenda for the Future of Human Settlements in an Urbanising World.

The declaration, notes one representative of a donor nation, aims to outline a clear-cut vision that will govern the work of the UN institutions and donor countries over the coming years.

During the conference, HABITAT II delegates seemed far from reaching a compromise on many of the disputed issues on the summit's agenda. Among the issues to be contested were ones related to new forms of the family, introducing sex education into the classroom and the rights of homosexuals. Along with several other delegates, representatives of Islamic nations objected to these topics on religious grounds. Youssef Hayasat, spokesman for the Arab delegates, asked that the phrase "forms of family" be struck from the summit's agenda as "it runs counter to our religion and traditions." Delegates from Group 77 and China also voiced their objections to this point. But while a workshop was set up to discuss the issue, according to Rahman Youssef Zein, a member of the Pakistani delegation, the outcome was inconclusive.

Also disputed was including the right for all to have shelter as a basic human right on the conference's agenda. This issue was strongly promoted by delegates from

countries of the south, but staunchly opposed by the US and Japan. Another committee was set up to debate the topic.

Although many countries are still at loggerheads, donor countries and several UN institutions have stressed that any financial aid to be extended to developing countries is contingent on their ratifying the declaration. A conference source stated that aid will be allocated to those who sign, while the requests submitted by those who do not will be taken lightly. Additionally, most western nations have refused to extend cash for the UN Housing Fund, opting instead to hammer out separate deals with developing countries as a way of exerting political pressure on these nations. "Efforts on the part of countries of the north to delay discussions on international cooperation points to the fact that they do not want to be held responsible for, or committed towards, financial aid to developing countries," said a delegate from one developing country.

This air of conditionality and discord has elicited a great deal of criticism about the conference itself. US Senator Jesse Helms, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, leveled accusations against UN of-

ficials for spending millions of dollars on "a conference that is doomed to failure."

On a brighter note, Ismail Sarragaddin, deputy-head of the World Bank, announced in the "elite session" that the WB and northern countries were seriously considering "reducing the debts shouldered by developing countries."

But as a prevailing cloud of uncertainty hovered over the summit, on the sidelines of the conference, events came to a head. Representatives of several non-governmental organisations (NGO) staged a march in Al-Istikhlal Street, black ribbons covering their mouths as a symbol of how they were being censored by their governments. They were also protesting the summit's agenda. Matters went from bad to worse, however, when Turkish police arrested some "environmental extremists".

The Istanbul conference wound up its work marking only one major victory, namely to have the provision of shelter declared a basic human right. The final declaration reiterated the programme of action, including the terminology, previously agreed upon at the Beijing conference.

## Going home

Will the national youth housing project solve Egypt's housing problem? Gihan Shahine investigates

Medhat Salah, 27, broke off his engagement after he was unable to afford an apartment in the private sector. So he rushed to apply for one in Al-Obour, where units are now being erected for young people like him, in search of affordable housing. Much to his dismay, the flats were too expensive.

Twenty-one kilometres east of downtown Cairo, Al-Obour city appears on the horizon, inspiring hope for a new life in the desert. At the entrance, a tree-lined road meets dusty gravel where construction is now at its peak. Four-storey apartment buildings, a school and a hospital already give the aura of a city in the making.

The 15,000 housing units in Al-Obour, one of greater Cairo's six satellite cities, are part of a national youth housing project aimed at serving newly-formed low-income families and young bachelors planning a married life. Applicants are required to be between 25 and 37 years of age, possess no other apartment and preferably already be married. Having a job in Al-Obour is an asset and applicants are entitled to only one apartment. There are no guidelines on income, however.

In spite of the barren desert view, the apartments might be considered a luxury for low-income youth: every flat houses a reception, two bedrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom and balcony in a 100 square metre area. Promised greenery will surround the buildings and owners are free to choose from the "best brands" of wall paint as well as ceramic decorations, included in the overall sales price. These perks, however, have made the apartments rather unaffordable.

An apartment costs LE45,000, but the government has subsidised LE10,000, bringing the price tag down to LE35,000 and payable in instalments: a down-payment of LE3,500; LE6,000 over two years (about LE250 a month); LE11,500 on receipt of the apartment; and the remaining LE14,000 over 27 years with a subsidised interest rate of six per cent — about LE84 a month. If the applicant cannot afford to pay the LE11,500 in cash upon receipt, the money can be added to the 27-year instalments, but at the current interest rate.

Many believe that both the conditions and the prices are unfair. "How on earth can I pay LE250 a month when my monthly salary is LE200," protests Ahmed Fathi, a 26-year-old civil servant who has tried to augment his income with afternoon jobs — even that of an assistant cook at a small hotel. "But the compensation was never enough."

Given the frustration of many who come to realise that their dream home is not affordable, some criticise the project as "impractical" or "of limited benefit to low-income youth."

An estimated 600,000 families are formed every year, 60,000 of which live below the poverty level in urban areas, says Abu Zeid Raghel, member of the Specialised National Councils and head of the Housing and Planning Section at the Academy of Scientific Research. Though unofficial, it is generally agreed that an income of under LE800 per year qualifies as under the poverty line. Since these 60,000 families cannot devote more than 16 per cent of their income to housing, the government should provide for them, recommends Raghel. But some say

the government is not able to subsidise 60,000 housing units per year.

Though Milad Hanna, a veteran housing expert, says that the government "is certainly adopting the wrong housing policy," he also says that it is assuming "too much financial responsibility compared to what is supplied." Statistics at the Ministry of Planning show that subsidised housing loans cost the government one billion Egyptian pounds in 1995 and 1996, he says.

The problem is mainly due to the fact that the units are being sold, rather than rented, says Hanna, which creates a dual financial problem: for the government and for the youth. In order to sell, the government needs to build. If the government subsidises the housing units and rents them out, residents could move out and buy affordable housing (if their income increases) and leave the subsidised housing for others in need. The youth, on the other hand, cannot spend thousands of pounds on living accommodations. And the government has never managed to offer 60,000 units per year at low prices.

The subsidised project does not seem to be solving many problems that low-income youth face with housing. Some expect the project to serve primarily as a commercial business. "Only the affluent will be able to buy the apartments, mostly for reasons of investment, and despite the strict measures taken against any abuse of the project," says Hanna, regretfully.

That the project is beneficial for the affluent, rather than the needy, is more than just an assumption set by Hanna. In fact, the percentage of occupation in satellite cities like 10th of Ramadan, 6th of October or the newer Al-Shorouk, does not

exceed 20 or 30 per cent of all the housing units, says Dr Hamdy Mohsen, head of the Civil Works Department at Ain Shams University's Faculty of Engineering. The consequence is that they have not relieved any of the overcrowding of Cairo, which was their main goal.

"The government should not have thought of starting a new project for youth before making full use of already established high and middle income housing in the satellite cities," he warns. Raghel claims that no more than 11,000 applicants showed serious interest in the Al-Obour project, a claim that is refuted by officials at the Ministry of New Development Communities. Undersecretary of State Mahmoud El-Sarnagawi boasts about the high demand for the apartments. Official statistics at the Housing and Development Bank, the body in charge of the project, indicate that the 15,000 units were applied for and sold.

Raghel and Hanna suggest that the government provide direct financial assistance to those in need, rather than subsidise the apartments themselves and make them available to those who can manage the cost. Raghel also suggests that "a social study to define target groups of a lower income" be conducted. "The government should then offer them small flats at subsidised rents, and gradually lift a yearly 10 per cent of the subsidy till it terminates it in 10 years time, when a young man would probably be financially independent," he says.

El-Sarnagawi defends the ministry's policy and categorises youth into four social sections: the rich, the fairly affluent who cannot afford steeply-priced private sector apartments, the less affluent who

cannot pay in cash but can afford instalments, and the needy ones who cannot pay in cash or even in instalments.

"The Al-Obour project can solve the problems of the first three categories, leaving only one to be addressed at a later stage," says El-Sarnagawi. "It is only then that the government can consider applying the rent system to help those below the poverty line." For the time being, El-Sarnagawi is satisfied with the project. "The government policy has opened up new fields of work for youth, has encouraged them to work and has improved their financial status in one way or another, rather than sit and wait for a government subsidy," he says. "The government is not ready to help those who do not help themselves."

El-Sarnagawi says, however, that the government has never been totally oblivious to the poorer sections of society. It established 38,000 apartments in several satellite cities and asked for a LE1,500 to LE8,000 down payment and a LE84 monthly instalment. "The apartments are certainly not as luxuriously built as those offered by the recent youth habitat project, but Al-Obour could offer a partial solution for some youth," he added.

Mohamed Ibrahim Soliman, minister of the New Development Communities, says that the project is a step towards solving Cairo's housing problems. "A problem cannot be solved over a year. This project will certainly help the government solve other problems faced by the poor. In the long run, the new satellite cities will operate on full power and that will be a great relief for Cairo's overpopulation and housing problems," says Soliman.

### Sufra Dayma

#### Zucchini in yoghurt

**Ingredients:**  
1 kg zucchini  
1 1/2 cups minced meat (cooked)  
8 cartons plain yoghurt  
1 whole egg, (beaten with 2 drops of vinegar)  
1 tbsp. crushed garlic  
2 tbsp. dry crushed mint  
2 tsp. corn starch  
1 cup beef or chicken stock  
1 tsp. corn oil  
Butter  
Salt, pepper, allspice, cumin, bay leaf

#### Method:

Scrub zucchini and stuff with seasoned minced meat after emptying their insides. Cook over low heat in stock with all the above spices. Remove zucchini and bay leaf from stock, reserving stock. It should not exceed half a cup. Stir yoghurt until creamy, then add egg and vinegar and heat, stirring vigorously until the yoghurt boils and is liquefied. Stir corn starch in some cold water, add to the yoghurt stirring until it boils and thickens. Add reserved stock and stir boil again, then add zucchini and cook in the yoghurt for 5 minutes. Leave the pan uncovered. In a saucepan, heat oil and stir fry very gently the garlic, then stir zucchini in and pour over heat for two minutes only. Serve with rice and tabouleh.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

### Restaurant review

## Thai me up

Good Thai pie in the sky? No, writes Nigel Ryan

The facade of Bua Khao is an unassuming affair, a wooden clad exterior that is perhaps more Swiss chalet than far east. The interior is equally unassuming, with plain tables, ladder-backed, rush seated chairs arranged in a brightly lit interior. There is a bar in one corner and on the walls are watercolours. It is certainly not the version of the orient that is most commonly presented in high street restaurants. Not a hint of a pagoda, no piped for Eastern ambience. A refreshing change. But then Bua Khao, alas, is an uncommon place.

The watercolours are of Bangkok. When you enter there is someone sitting cross-legged besides a multi-holed poaching tray, dropping spoonfuls of coconut milk batter into the holes and removing them when they are almost, but not quite, solid. The results look like rosinut poached eggs and taste delicious.

The menu, though it does not over reach itself, offers plenty of choice. We selected Yum Neua Yang, a sliced, grilled beef salad. Kao tung na tang, a dish of minced shrimps served with a crispy rice pancake, pad bua khao, fried meat and seafood in oyster sauce, and a version of Thai noodles.

The shrimps, finely chopped rather than minced, were refreshingly light, thanks to the addition of herbs and lemon. The beef salad was excellent. The meat, after being marinated with coriander, mint, chili, garlic and onion, had not been grilled to death, as is too often the case. It was allowed to remain moist, was served warm in a little liquor, accompanied by salad vegetables. Generally I

am not overly fond of such cold-hot combinations, nor am a great fan of coriander which, particularly when it is fresh, can easily overpower everything it touches. But at Bua Khao dishes are constructed with delicacy and this particular combination could not be faulted.

The Thai style noodles comprised crisp strips of fried duck, grated cabbage, courgettes, finely chopped peanuts and prawns. It roamed the difficult task of being sweet without being cloying. Pad bua khao contained, alongside prawns and beef, strips of carrot, tiny florets of broccoli and string beans. The vegetables had been lightly steamed before being added to the oyster sauce, which meant that they retained both texture and taste.

Together with an order of steamed rice and two local beers the bill came to LE83, which included a small order of the coconut milk dessert which are cooked to order. This is far from expensive for food that had obviously been cooked with care, and with an eye on fresh, locally available produce.

Bua Khao does not attempt the impossible. It does the possible, though, extraordinarily well. By paying attention to marketing, and by knowing what is what in the kitchen, it produces food that seldom, if ever, disappoints. And in this price range that is more than enough to encourage the paying of a visit, and then to return. They do not, incidentally, use monosodium glutamate.

Bua Khao, 9, Road 151, Old Maadi.  
Tel: 35 00 126

### Al-Ahram Weekly

#### Crossword

By Samia Abdenmour

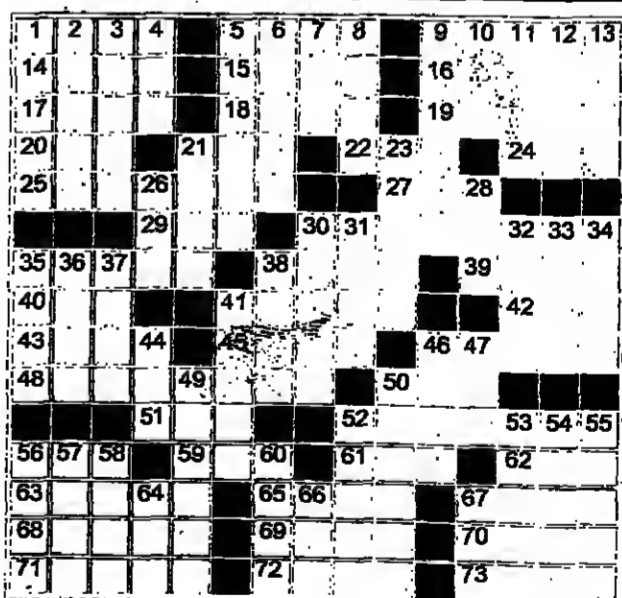
#### ACROSS

1. Virile (4)
5. Music halls (4)
9. Ethical (5)
14. A crystalline compound (4)
15. South African hill (4)
16. Mindful (5)
17. Fly high (4)
18. Small spirit stove (4)
19. Napes (5)
20. Mischievous child (3)
21. Cereal used in bread making (3)
22. Play a practical joke on (3)
24. Superlative suffix (3)
25. Dismiss from service with disgrace (7)
27. Seize (3)
29. Finale (3)
30. Do an injustice (7)
35. Committee (5)
38. Frosts (4)
39. Entreaty (4)
40. Sped (3)

41. Fully grown (5)  
42. Pose (3)  
43. Jot (4)  
44. Puerilities (4)  
45. Scottish Celts (5)  
46. Capable of being moulded (8)  
50. Curve (3)  
51. Initials written on certain transport vehicles (3)  
52. In short (7)  
56. To...with love (3)  
59. Crumbs (3)  
61. Illuminated (3)  
62. Deer (3)  
63. Goodbye (5)  
65. French friends (4)  
67. New star (4)  
68. Commit to memory (5)  
69. Misplace (4)  
70. God of War (4)  
71. Mixed cold dish (5)  
72. Weather directions (4)  
73. Impudent (4)

#### DOWN

1. Food of love (5)
2. Fragrance (5)
3. Hops (5)
4. Spike of corn (3)
5. Complicated with (6)
6. Intimide (5)
7. Sea eagle (3)
8. Culture medium (4)
9. Trough to stable (6)
10. Obligated to (3)
11. Contest (4)
12. Boxes (4)
13. Unless (4)



21. Outer fruit covering (4)
23. Feeling of guilt or remorse (5)
26. Pronoun (3)
28. Incline (3)
30. Sharp; pointed (5)
31. Semi-solid colloidal solutions (4)
32. Otherwise (4)
33. Yashmak (4)
34. Devours (4)
35. Ladies' innergarment, pl. (4)
36. Pledge (4)
37. Small wild ox of Celebes (4)
38. Apple of one's eye (4)
41. Spindle on which something revolves (5)
44. Members of Council of both Houses, abb. (3)
46. Clench teeth (4)
47. Expert (3)
49. On all sides (6)
50. Ascended (6)
52. Extreme happiness (5)
53. Poetic for "frozen" (5)
54. Don Juan (5)
55. Bread necessity (5)
56. Indian tree yielding dammar resin, pl. (4)
57. Concept (4)
58. Asian monetary unit (4)
60. Story (4)
64. Time period (3)
66. Do a gardening job (3)
67. Forty winks (3)

Fayza Hassan

"A step in the right direction", seems to be the consensus on the new unified child code, whose executive bill is to be issued soon. Although children under the age of 18 constitute 40 per cent of the population, Dina Ezzat finds out that a lot still needs to be done before children's rights are fully protected



photo: Ayman Ibrahim



photo: Salah Ibrahim



photo: Khaled El-Fiqi



photo: Salah Ibrahim

# Little steps

The progress of a nation is measured by the quality of life given to its children. In a country like Egypt, where children under the age of 18 constitute 40 per cent of the population, improving the quality of life for the young is imperative to sustainable development.

Egypt has made great strides in reducing child mortality and malnutrition, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). But there is a lot of room for improvement in other areas; hence a national unified law on children's rights will soon be on the books.

The executive bill for the unified child code is currently being drafted by the Cabinet. Once issued, it will implement Egypt's new legislation on child rights.

The new legislation contains nine chapters encompassing the areas of education, healthcare, social services and legal rights. In theory, its 144 articles should improve the lives of some 25 million girls and boys from the day they are born until they turn 18.

Reactions to the new child code have varied widely. Some have called it a landmark on the road to improving children's living conditions. Others have dismissed it as an uncreative rewrite of the 1,200 current legislative texts on children. But most commentators seem to agree that it is a step in the right direction "which cannot stand on its own".

"There are three main objectives for this law — the child's well-being, development and protection," said Amina El-Ghundi, secretary-general of the Council for Motherhood and Childhood, the sponsors of the new legislation.

According to its supporters, the legislation breaks new ground in several domains. It raises the legal age ceiling of childhood from 16 to 18 and the legal minimum age for child labour from 12 to 14. It also maintains that every child enrolled in school should have a medical record and prohibits the physical punishment of any child under 18 who is charged with committing a crime. And it stipulates tough penalties for factory owners who breach the international standards of children's food.

But those who were not too impressed say that the new law steers clear of controversial issues and thus fails to address the acute problems from which thousands of children suffer every day.

For example, while over 30 per cent of the estimated 6 million physically handicapped children in the country were deformed due to hereditary diseases, the new code fails to mention them. A proposed article that required all men and women to undergo pre-marital medical testing, to avoid exacerbating the problem, was scrapped during the parliamentary discussion of the draft legislation.

"Parliament was completely against this article," said Fathi Naguib, senior consultant to the Minister of Justice and a major architect of the new legislation. "Had we insisted on it, the entire text would have been hijacked by this one article," he added.

Critics also protest that the text of the new law fails to spell out the criminal nature of female genital mutilation (FGM) to which, it is estimated, at least 88,000 girls are subjected monthly.

The thousands of children who are denied Egyptian citizenship because they are born to an Egyptian mother and foreign father are not included in the text either. "We really wanted to include all of this, but you cannot shock society. You need to move slowly," El-Ghundi said.

Though recent media reports have spotlighted accounts of parents who brutally beat, and sometimes even torture their children with electric shocks, heated iron bars and cigarette butts, the new code makes no mention of child abuse. "The law chooses to act as if it did not exist," said one children's rights activist.

The problem, according to sources at the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA), is that the legislation does not consider the issues at hand within their larger context.

For example, in a bid to counter the growing trend of school drop-outs, the code stipulates that all children must attend school for 12 years. Non-governmental statistics suggest that among primary school students, at least 36 per cent — mostly girls living in rural areas — fail to finish their primary school education.

However, these same statistics show that 80 per cent of drop-outs come from very poor families who not only cannot afford to send their children to school, but who also are driven by dire economic circumstances to encourage or even force their offspring to work and bring in money for "more necessary things" than education.

Mohamed Mamdouh is a 12-year-old boy who dropped out from school at the age of nine to work at a car repair workshop in Abassiya. He enjoys going to school even though his family could not afford to get him "nice clothes and new shoes at the beginning of every other academic year" like his school mates. Mohamed wanted to be an engineer, but because his father suddenly deserted the family and left them with no money to support themselves, he had to leave the classroom and work. "I am the man of this family. My mother works but we need more money," he said.

Doctors assert that children who have to work at bakeries, workshops and other dangerous small-scale industries that fail to meet the minimal environmental and health standards are subjected to serious health hazards. Sociologists add that these jobs often make children violent and prone to engage in criminal activity.

Last year, media reports described a horrific case involving the owner of a car repair workshop who pumped air into the bowels of a nine-year-old boy working for him. In another case, reported this year, a physician repeatedly beat an eight-year-old girl working for him as house help. When the girl complained to her family, the employer tied her to a bed in a dark room and left her with hardly any food or drink to stop her from making further complaints.

In both cases the employers were summoned to defend themselves in a court of law. But there is nothing to ensure that other children are not subject to the same mistreatment.

According to the government's own estimates, there are about 1.4 million children under the age of 14 in the labour market. Of these, 77 per cent work in agriculture, 9 per cent in construction. Most of these children work up to 11 hours a day with no more than a 30-minute break.

At least half a million of these children had to work after their education became a big financial burden on their families.

Just like good education, a comprehensive healthcare system for children requires a massive budget which officials are still unprepared to allocate. But the health record card is another asset of the new code.

Sarah, Ibrahim and Shaima are three school children, aged 4, 9

and 12 years. All three suffer from cancer. Their doctor, Mohamed Fawzi, says that early detection would have made their therapy easier and better. "So, from this point of view, the card system is going to be good if it incorporates proper full check-ups," Fawzi said.

On average each of these children need about LE50,000-LE100,000 for two years of treatment, according to Fawzi, who works at the National Centre for Tumors. Patients with more serious cases need much more money. If the child recovers successfully, additional money is needed for follow-up treatment for about five years. Sarah wants to be a painter, Ibrahim and Shaima want to be doctors. For this to happen, enough money has to be provided. "The problem is that this legislation fails to mention funding," Fawzi said.

According to a study conducted by the Children Studies Centre at Ain Shams University, at least 40 per cent of Egyptian children suffer from some form of hepatitis. "Most of these cases are curable with the right treatment and nutrition, but who is going to provide for it?" asked one pediatrician who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Non-governmental organisations concerned with children's health care say that they can help the government if they are given a free hand.

The Human Relief Agency (HRA) of the Doctors Syndicate started a project, earlier this year, to annually provide 20 deaf and physically handicapped children with hearing and walking aids. "We do this in cooperation with the concerned governmental hospitals," said Mohamed Abdel-Khaleq of the HRA. The HRA collects donations, buys the equipment and gives it to the concerned hospitals and centres which then distribute them among children who cannot afford to buy medical aids. "But if the government issues a decree stopping us from collecting donations tomorrow, then we will stop," Abdel-Khaleq said.

The status of abandoned and neglected children is another area which the legislation leaves obscure. Officials at the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) say they have no exact figures for the number of street kids in Egypt today.

But a recent UNICEF report suggests that there are around 60,000-90,000 street kids in Egypt, 40,000 of whom are illegitimate children or children who run away from family because of maltreatment or broken parental relations.

According to the UNICEF report, many of these children eventually become delinquents.

The MSA runs two types of shelters for abandoned and neglected children. It divides the girls and boys, that it cares for, into two categories: the permanently and the temporarily neglected.

First, there are the abandoned, the illegitimate and those who have lost track of their families. This group, whose relatives are dead or cannot be traced, are taken to hundreds of foster families — a system applied in Egypt since the late 1950s — or one of three "children's villages". "We figure that children in this category need long-term care and we believe that these are stable forms of care," said Effat El-Kateb, director of the MSA's childhood department.

The SOS village is one of the most prominent alternative children's villages. According to its director, Rashed Radi, SOS receives children from the age of two. "The Ministry of Health finds them abandoned when they are newborns or just a few weeks old. It refers them to wet nurses and then they come here," Radi explained.

Currently, there are 122 girls and boys at the SOS village in Nasr City. Two other SOS bases, located outside of Cairo, house some 200 children.

The children are divided into groups and each group is assigned to a "mother". "They lead a perfectly normal life: go to school, and take pocket money," Radi said. According to him, the SOS has succeeded in establishing real family ties between the girls and boys of each "family".

If the child has a problem in "his or her family" they go to Radi who is the acting father of the entire village.

At the age of 16, boys leave the village and move to other shelters under the supervision of the MSA. "But they stay in touch with their sisters and younger brothers," noted Radi.

SOS provides for children until they receive enough education to get a job. "Also, if one of the girls or boys wanted to get married we act as the family and inquire about the prospective spouse and help arrange for the wedding," Radi said.

"No, it is not like being with your own family. I see my girlfriends with their real parents and I can tell the difference," said one girl who asked for her name to be withheld. But, "it is better than being on the street".

El-Kateb admits that these children are not given 100 per cent real family-like treatment. "But it is second best".

The second category of neglected children, according to the guidelines of the MSA, comprises children who have families that cannot support them, either because of broken family ties or extreme poverty. "These are mostly kids who either have living relatives who cannot afford to support them or divorced or jailed parents," El-Kateb explained.

Those children end up going to shelters where "they receive healthcare as well as education". Currently there are about 165 shelters that serve about 5,000 children a year. "As children come of age or get jobs, they become independent," El-Kateb said.

Children's rights activists argue that many of these shelters fail to provide for the basic emotional and material needs of the children and thus encourage them to run away and become involved in pick-pocketing, begging, inner city drug-trafficking and even prostitution.

Faced with the many question marks put on the true value of this law, its sponsors believe that it should be judged after it is put into effect and not before.

## Girls' share

Reem Leila finds out that the smaller the family pie, the bigger the boys' share

Mohamed Osman, a carpenter, and Om Ali, his wife, do not believe in the rights of female children. "Males are the only creatures whose rights should be considered. My sons help me with my work, to read the newspapers, and whatever else I need. Girls are good for nothing but standing in front of the mirror," said Osman.

Om Ali echoes her husband's sentiments: "This is true. I give my husband and sons the better portion of food, while my daughters and I eat anything. It does not matter."

Attitudes such as those expressed by the Osman family are rather common. As a result, many young girls today are unable to enjoy the same rights as their male peers. This discrimination translates, in many cases, into a gender-segregated approach towards development programmes, education and healthcare.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has defined human development as an individual's ability to choose among available alternatives. It appears that females have not achieved the desired human development because from birth and through different stages of their lives, they are unable to choose due to various social and cultural restrictions.

Though the Egyptian constitution provides both genders equal opportunity to obtain a free education, in practice the lower the social class of the family, the less a girl enjoys her rights as a child. Sociologist, Salwa El-Amry pointed out, "In 1994 illiteracy among males was estimated to be 35 per cent, while for females it was 60 per cent."

This phenomenon is especially true in poor families and those in rural areas. "Such families prefer to have the girls stay at home to be prepared for marriage. Boys are educated in order to work in suitable jobs, in the future, to earn a reasonable sum of money to cover their families' expenses," says El-Amry.

Inequality among male and female children is particularly obtrusive when it comes to healthcare. Though medical services are theoretically available to both males and females, male children enjoy more attention and care from their families, especially among the poorer classes. According to Dr Shafika Nasser, professor of public health at Cairo University, the mortality rate among girls between the ages of one and five is 58 per 1000, while for boys of the same age group it is 53 per 1000.

The greater attention given to boys' health is noticeable especially during the weaning period. Awatef El-Sayed, a housewife from a poor family, said, "I have to take care of my son more than the daughter because the boy has to work when he grows up, but the girl will get married."

The disparities in the treatment of genders are also evident in parents' attitudes towards children's vaccination and inoculation. A 1994 health poll showed that 70 per cent of male children have received all necessary vaccinations, while among the females the figure did not exceed 55 per cent.

Early marriages and female genital mutilation (FGM) are also common violations of young girls' rights. The official statistics in Egypt indicate that over 30 per cent of married women were first married at 16 years of age or under, while nearly 67 per cent of girls were subject to FGM.

"Early marriage and FGM are considered a crime against civil and Islamic laws," said Zeinab Radwan, member of the legislative committee of the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood.

Because of these social pressures, a girl's ambitions are curbed and her capabilities are often wasted. Boys sometimes find breathing space through involvement in social and other group activities like sports. These same choices and opportunities are not available to girls due to cultural and social restrictions.

According to psychologist Nahed Kamzy, studies analysing the content of children's books and magazines in Egypt reveal a clear gender-bias. Research also shows that historical and literary figures are generally male. All of the Egyptian children's magazines bare male names.

The proportion of female figures to the total personalities in a story is only 13 per cent," said Kamzy.



photo: Khaled El-Fiqi

## Street smarts

"MY PARENTS are dead. I have never known them. I have never had any uncles or aunts. I have never had a family," says a little boy who is about one metre tall, smiling broadly. He says his name is Sameh and that he is nine years old.

Sameh wears a green jumper on top of a grey turtleneck, both of which are riddled with holes, and a pair of ripped blue trousers that are too big for him to keep around his waist. One glance at his clothes is enough to see that they have not been washed for months — if ever.

The same can be said of his hair and bare feet: both are almost hidden underneath thick layers of dirt and dust.

In his hands he holds a little piece of dirty cloth. "With this I clean cars. This is my work." A job he seems to be doing fine: "Do you know how much money I make everyday? At least LE5. Sometimes I make even LE7 or LE10," says Sameh.

This nine-year-old has never been to school. "Well, I live on the street in Tahrir [square] where all the buses park, and I sleep under a bridge nearby."

Sameh does not seem to be terribly bothered by living on the streets. "I do not live alone. I live with other kids. They are my friends. They also work in different things."

These other kids make their living by cleaning cars, selling bags of bread or packages of tissue paper, or working in workshops. "You know, I used to work at a bakery. It was very hard work. I would work all day and part of the night. But the

me sleep in the bakery. I had to sleep in the streets," Sameh recalled. "Anyway, I got sick of it. But I would not leave without getting what he owed me. Don't you think that it is fair that I should take my dues?" For Sameh the answer is clear: "I worked for him, right? So I earned the money," he says emphatically.

One day the bakery owner asked Sameh to fetch him a package of cigarettes. "He gave me money to buy the expensive kind — not [the local] Cleopatra, but the red-labeled package for LE3.10. And that was it. I took the money and I took off. Well, of course he owed me much more but at least I got part of it," he says triumphantly.

That was a year ago. And it was then that Sameh had his first encounter with Ahmed.

"Ahmed is a big guy. He is not a kid like the rest of us. He is big." It was Ahmed who introduced Sameh to the car cleaning business. "He let me sleep in a spot near his under the bridge." But like the bakery owner, Ahmed does not give Sameh enough money. "If I make LE10 a day, he would only give me LE1. So if I wanted more money to, say, buy a nice dinner of Hawawshi [minced meat loaf] I have to make more than LE10," explains Sameh.

One particularly bad day, Sameh earned LE2 and Ahmed failed to give him any of it. So Sameh decided to take revenge. "That night I waited till

he fell asleep and I took his blanket off him. Then, I went and slept far from that bridge. I was covered by the blanket all night through which is not bad because I do not have a blanket." But in the morning Ahmed found him and beat him up.

While making do on the streets, Sameh is hoping for better. "I would like to get another job. I could work for a koshari restaurant," he says. It is the stability that makes a job with a koshari restaurant so attractive to Sameh. "I am very honest so I would never steal anything, or any food. I would only eat what the owner offers me or the leftovers." Sameh is willing to accept any employer-imposed conditions for such a job: "The owner can lock me in the store overnight to make sure that I would not steal anything and run away."

Another option that Sameh considers is to work as a driver's assistant on a micro-bus. "The driver could also let me spend the night in the car. At least I would not have to wake up and move if it rains at night in winter," Sameh contemplates.

The first thing that Sameh would like to do if he got either job is to buy a pair of shoes. "I used to have a pair. I got them from the mosque. But they were stolen," he recalls. Sameh used to put his shoes under his head when he went to sleep. "Some kids, who are not my friends, would try and steal them but I would feel something moving next to my head," he said. But one night Sameh was too tired to feel the hands that snatched his shoes. "I don't like walking barefoot, especially in the summer when the streets are so hot."

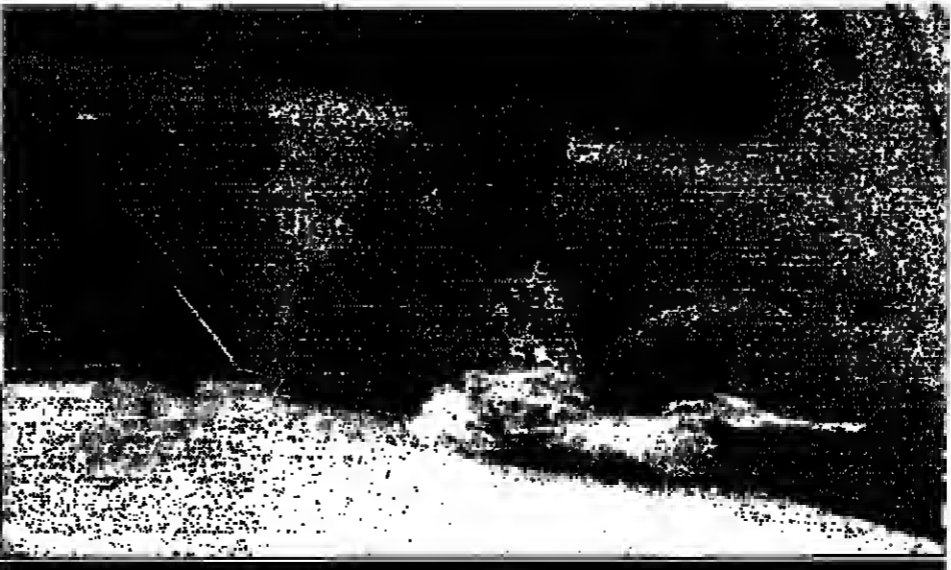


photo: Khaled El-Fiqi

# Shoreline protection

Environmentalists are waving the stick most dear to entrepreneurs: clean up your act or don't even try to compete. Sherine Nasr reports from Hurghada

Hurghada's environment has been abused, investment has long been uncontrolled and tourism has suffered, say the environmentalists. Investors, on the other hand, complain about the bureaucracy of environmental regulations and worry about the costs of being too environmentally friendly.

These faces (but sometimes also friends) met face-to-face in the first regional conference sponsored by the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) and the Environment Quality International (EQI) in Hurghada last month. There, environmentalists laid out the impact of poor tourism investments and proposed ways to make policy makers, investors and local residents aware of environmental regulations already in place, but not often abided by.

Between 40 and 60 per cent of the offshore coral reefs in Hurghada, for example, have been destroyed and developers have constructed tourist villages on top of them, said Salah Hafez, the EEAA executive director. The shoreline is now severely eroded and "we don't know when it will stop," he said. Though the reefs might in fact be dead, as investors claim, "they are vital for the propagation and growth of new reefs," he said.

Environmental Law No. 4 of 1994 stipulates that new tourist projects not encroach on the natural shoreline. Marinas constructed on concrete, for example, are not allowed. And hotels may build their own marinas but only if they abide by EEAA criteria. Marinas are also required to have a valid operating licence and licenses are withdrawn when environmental regulations are violated.

Also part of the package are measures for hiding land filling (the EEAA has decided to fill in lagoons that lie between land-filled "fingers" on the beach) and a requirement that investors submit an "environmental assessment impact" of a project for approval before construction begins.

The EEAA's Hafez believes such laws are the only way to ensure that violations don't occur.

"Environmentally sound development is costly, but we have to make it clear to investors that it is the only possible means to achieve sustainable profits and long-term investment," he said, adding that environmentally protected areas like Sharm El-Sheikh "attract a calibre of tourist willing to pay considerably more for accommodation."

The regulations are, despite this reasoning, not without critics. Ali Khalil, a member of the Investors Society in Hurghada, claims, for example, that environmental assessments of the area as a whole "is normal," but to treat each project separately is "simply bureaucratic". But fortunately, nature is patient. Time will enable the environment to readjust itself, perhaps in the course of twenty years or so. And development has not been stemmed as much as subject to control. Other more informal environmental protection measures were also suggested at the conference.

"The local residents of Sharm El-Sheikh play an active part in preserving the environment, and this is what we are trying to establish in Hurghada," said Hafez. Though Captain Mustafa Taber, head of the Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA), similarly believes that "the support of the governorate" is necessary, he also thinks it is sufficient, and that there is no need for a special law. As rapid solutions need to be implemented to save underwater life in Hurghada, he would like diving centre operators, fishermen and boatmen to be immediately addressed. "These people know exactly where to find coral reef formations and schools of fish," and thus can help safeguard these precious resources.

Most local sailors who work on fully-equipped hotel-owned boats, said Taber, do not know how to use the equipment and thereby pose a risk to the coral reefs. "They do not know how to read maps or operate radar or other safety devices." Though there is a monitoring system in place to watch out for anchors cast from boats on off-shore reefs, for example, "it is not feasible for a naval unit to chase an amateur's motor boat over a great distance," he said, suggesting instead that a radar and wireless service be established along the shore to monitor and report violations.

Samah Sawiris, a businessman and owner of a number of tourist projects in the Red Sea area, wondered why the concern for a clean sea overrules concern for a clean city. "To ensure a clean city is an easier task, but the governorate seems to ignore this fact," he said. "The sight of garbage, plastic bags and debris near Hurghada airport and in the streets is appalling to foreigners." He suggested that trucks unloading debris have their licences withdrawn for at least a month. The confiscated vehicle could then be used to clean the city streets. "This is what happened to one of my company's trucks. The violation, I might add, was the last committed by the company drivers."

The conference was part of an awareness campaign launched by the EEAA and conducted by the EQI to consolidate a front supportive of environmentally sound practices in Egypt. A series of other conferences will soon take place in Luxor, Aswan, Alexandria and Ismailia to discuss means of conserving the cultural heritage of Egypt and curb sea erosion in coastal cities.

Until such practices become the norm rather than the exception, Hurghada must be dealt with strictly "or it will soon become a third-rate resort," said Hafez.

## Spotlight on Hurghada

INSPECTORS have been scouting through Hurghada's shops to uncover illegal sales of corals and shells. Last month, a number of violations were referred to courts for appropriate punishment. Shops can be permanently shut down after the second violation.

NATURAL preserves are on the increase in the Red Sea area, thanks to efforts made by the EEAA. Soon to be so dubbed is Wadi El-Gemal, a valley 55km south of Marsa Alam, famous for its abundant palms and papyrus, and further south at Elba — an archipelago of 24 islands famous for its mangroves.

RED SEA Governor Abdel-Moneim Said and major investors have formed a Higher Council for Tourism. Among items on the agenda of their monthly meetings are fund-raising, road paving and area greening.

GARBAGE is a problem in Hurghada and major investors are working collectively to solve it. Funds have already been collected, a project to recycle garbage into fertilisers is underway, and a study is being conducted by the Faculty of Engineering at Alexandria University to select an appropriate location for a permanent garbage dump.

CONSTRUCTION regulations are now neatly packaged into a guide and provided to investors by the Hurghada Governorate. Among the banned and stipulated are the following: buildings that overlook the sea cannot exceed one storey; higher buildings are only permitted inside the city; no building may occupy more than 20 per cent of a project's total land area; local materials are preferably used in construction; white must be the colour of newly constructed building facades; and bright lights are banned on the beach so as not to disturb the coral reefs and marine life.

## Mameluke masterpiece on display

After four years of restoration work, Beit Zeinab Khatoun has been opened to the public. Nevine El-Aref describes its charms

Beit Zeinab Khatoun is one of the most charming Mameluke houses to be found in the Al-Azhar area of Cairo. It was built in 1468, when the architectural style was in an early stage of development. The house is located in El-Tablini Street — including Beit El-Harawi, which is in the Turkish style, and Beit Sitt Wasila, another house in the Mameluke architectural style — and the great mosque of Al-Azhar.

In typical Mameluke style, the house comprises a main entrance which leads to an open courtyard surrounded by many rooms. The rooms include a *salamlak* (meo's wing), a *haramlek* (women's wing) and a *miq'ad sefi* (summer sitting room).

Beit Zeinab Khatoun was named after its last owner Zeinab Khatoun, the wife of El-Sherif Hamza El-Kharboly, a high-ranking government official in the first half of the last century. Documents reveal that the first owner of the house was the great-granddaughter of Sultan Qaloun, who lived in the 13th century.

The elegance of the house was such that the building was officially registered as a historical site in 1882 and partially restored many times by the Arab Archaeological Committee from 1883 until 1953. Mohamed El-Soghayer, general director of antiquities for northern Cairo, explained that major restoration was carried out in 1905 when the walls were strengthened and an inner wooden stairway linking the two upper levels of the house was constructed. All wooden elements, including ceilings and closets, were cleaned and restored at that time. In 1933 a new entrance was made giving direct access to the second floor. In 1942 the house was rented to a British general who built a fountain in the middle of the open courtyard on the first floor.

After the revolution of 1952, El-Soghayer continued, the house was given to the Ministry of Social Insurance which turned it into a weaving school for girls, and the house deteriorated alarmingly. In 1981 the school was relocated and the house was closed for restoration.

At the opening ceremony last week Abdel-Halim Nouraddin, secretary-general of the Supreme Council Of Antiquities (SCA), said that the restoration was carried out by Egyptians and financed by the SCA. El-Soghayer said that the aim of the recent restoration project was to strengthen the house structurally, to replace damaged stones by others of the same size, shape and quality as the original and to treat woodwork for the effects of the environment and insects.

In an effort to develop the area around Beit Zeinab Khatoun, the SCA has cultivated a small garden between it and Beit El-Harawi. The house is open to the public between 8 am and 2 pm and may later open for a period in the afternoon as well. The price of admission is LE5 for foreigners, LE2.50 for foreign students and PT50 for Egyptians.



photo: Sherif Sonbol

## Aswan's healing sands

Like Safage, Aswan is emerging as a curative destination for sufferers of rheumatic illnesses. Rehab Saad explored the Isis Island spa's potential

If a place is endowed, as is Aswan, with dry weather, unpolluted air, sweet water, a landscape of the Nile, mountains, the ochre-shaded desert and palm trees, it could just be a picturesque site. But graced as it is with "black sand" that helps treat rheumatism, this Upper Egyptian city has all the ingredients necessary for health tourism.

Aswan has long proven itself a destination famous for tombs, temples and *felucca* rides and is now striving to promote its reputation as a health spa locale. It's not a new reputation; from the time of the pharaohs through to the Graeco-Roman and medieval periods until the present time, Aswan's curative powers have been well-known. The reputation has simply been reinvented at the Isis Hotel.

"Before we built the hotel, the people of Aswan who suffered from rheumatism used to come to this very spot and bury themselves in the sand," said Magdi Michael, general-manager of the new health resort on Isis Island.

The late Aga Khan, who suffered from rheumatism, took his doctors' advice and also tried the sand cure in Aswan. The treatment was so successful that he returned annually to Aswan. Before he died, he asked to be buried in the only place he found relief, overlooking his favourite section of the Nile.

The first attempt to promote Aswan as a place of healing was when previous Minister of Tourism Adel Taber invited 15 foreign

patients who were so crippled by rheumatic pains that they were confined to wheelchairs. Accompanied by their doctors, they stayed in Aswan for 15 days and were buried in the healing sands on a daily basis. They left Egypt on their own two feet. An Egyptian Tourist Authority film shows the patients dancing with Nubians on the eve of their departure.

Aswan's Governor Salah Mesbah is optimistic about the new kind of health tourism being promoted there and wants to reach out to Scandinavian countries "where the weather is extremely cold and rheumatoid ailments are widespread," he said.

The launching of the Isis Hotel as a health spa came after the Red Sea resort of Safage made a name for itself as the "black sand" pioneer. There, scientists gained experience in natural curing methods after studies showed that people living in Safage and Aswan hardly ever suffered from rheumatoid ailments. "At the outset, we had no idea how the sand should be exploited or even how long a patient should be buried in it," said Maher Youssef Isifan, head of the research group of the National Research Centre.

Every patient now undergoes a medical examination before treatment; doctors check on the efficiency of the patient's immunity system and muscle infections are cured. The sand treatment lasts between 21 to 28 days and the patient is coated in a 3 to 5 cm layer of sand for two to three hours daily, at sunset or sunrise. The treat-

## How to get there

### Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet stations are located in Al-Helwan (Helwan), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almazra and the airport. Tickets: LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter. A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almazra at 7.15am. Tickets from Almazra LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Port Said Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almazra, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said Service 6.45am, from Ramsis Square to Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almazra. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets: LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada Service 8pm, from Ramsis Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh Service 1pm, from Tahrir, then Almazra. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company Buses travel to North Sinai, south Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qalbi (near Ramsis Square), Almazra and Tahrir Square (near Helwan). Buses to north and south Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 442-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qalbi, then Almazra and Tahrir Square. Tickets: deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qalbi, then Almazra and Tahrir Square. Tickets: deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qalbi, then Almazra and Tahrir Square. Tickets: deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almazra. Tickets: morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nasrallah Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almazra. Tickets: deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Stations at Tahrir and Almazra. Tel. 243-1646.

Cairo-Hurghada Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safage Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Olympic Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

### Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 375-3353.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan "French" deluxe trains with sleepers.

Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians; to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.

"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers. Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria "Tahira" train Service 8am. Tickets: first class LE33 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.

Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 3pm and 7pm. Tickets: first class LE23; second class LE17.

"French" trains: Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets: first class LE28; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets: first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir. Tel. 390-0999. Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 759-0806.

Cairo-Aswan Tickets LE390 for Egyptians, LE991 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor Tickets LE220 for Egyptians, LE780 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada LE780 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh: Tickets LE246 for Egyptians, LE821 for foreigners, both round-trip.

### Sunny summer deals

#### Hotels

Here's a look at the special rates most hotels, especially resorts, are offering to Egyptians and foreign residents.

Cairo: Mövenpick Jolie Ville. LE75 per person for a double room including service and taxes. Valid until 30 September.

Hurghada: Hurghada International. LE200 for a single, LE240 for a double room including breakfast and taxes. Valid until 15 July. Hurghada Marriott. LE200 per person in a double room including breakfast, service charge and taxes. Valid until 15 July. Helwan Regim Hurghada. LE120 per person in a double room including breakfast, dinner, buffet and taxes. Valid until the end of the summer season.

Sharm El-Sheikh: Sharm El-Sheikh Marriott. LE240 for a single or double room including breakfast, service charge and taxes. Valid until 31 July. Ghazala Hotel. LE190 for a double room and LE130 for a single room including breakfast. Valid until the end of June.

Sharm El-Sheikh: Mövenpick Hotel. LE200 for a single and LE250 for a double room in the front by the swimming pool. LE250 over 11 days. LE160 for a single and LE200 for a double room in the back, or sports area. Prices include buffet breakfast, service charge and taxes. Valid until the end of July.

Ismailia: Ismailia Forsan Island. LE80 per person for a double room including breakfast. Price valid until the end of the summer.

### Travel agencies

Travel agencies are offering various packages both inside and outside Egypt this summer.

Flamingo tours: A trip to Nice is LE2,850 for 8 days, Nice and London is LE5,490 for 15 days. Spain and Portugal is LE2,550 over 11 days. Athens and Rhodes is LE3,280 for 10 days, Paris and London is LE4,950 for 15 days. Rome, Florence, Venice is LE4,750 for 10 days and Singapore, Tokyo, Hongkong, Bangkok is \$3,335 for 19 days. Prices for a special cruise around the Mediterranean in deluxe boats start from \$1,382 for 8 days.

Kimidar tours is organizing weekly trips to Antalya, Turkey starting from 17 July. Prices range from LE1,599 to LE2,195 for 8 days. A trip to Athens is LE2,550 over 11 days and Paris LE4,125, Athens and the neighbouring islands by boat LE3,025, Istanbul LE1,735. All trips are for 8 days.

Kimidar is also organizing trips to Marsa Matruh for LE295, Sharm El-Sheikh for LE255, Alexandria for LE175, Port Said LE195 and Hurghada LE295.

Thomas Cook is organizing trips to Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh. Prices for 5 days in five star hotels start from LE607. Outside Egypt, the company is offering trips to Istanbul for 8 days for LE1,635, Rome for 7 days for LE1,998, Paris for 8 days for LE1,137 and Paris and Nice for 11 days for LE3,789.

Karnak tours is organizing trips to Marsa Matruh for 4 days in three-star hotels on a half-board basis at prices starting from LE295. The company is also offering trips to Istanbul for 8 days at prices starting from LE1,450.

## EGYPT AIR

**Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:**

Abn Simbel Sales Office:	374836-324735
Alexandria Offices: Ram:	4833357-4829778
Gleem:	5865461-5865434
Airport Office:	4218444-4227886-4247837-4241989
Aswan Office:	3158000/12/3/4
Airport Office:	480387-481658
Assiut Office:	323151-322711-324000-329407
Mansoura Office:	363978-363733
Hurghada Office:	443591/4
Airport Office:	442883-443597
Ismailia Office:	328937-321958-221951/2-328936
Luxor Office:	384588/12/3/4
Airport Office:	388567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382360
Marsa Matruh Office:	934398
Menoufia Office (Sheikh El Koni):	233382-233523-233522
New Valley Office:	865901/695
Port Said Office:	224125-222876-228921
Port Said Office Karnak:	238833-239970
Sharm El Sheikh Office:	608314-608409
Airport Office:	608408
Taba Office:	608530810-530011
Direct:	5783620
Tanta Office:	311750/311780
Zakazik Office:	349829-349830/1

408/30/350



Germany's Stephan Reuter (R) and Russia's Igor Kolyvanov (L) fight for the ball during a group C match (photo: Reuters)

## It's a knockout

As Euro 96 enters the knockout stage, the qualifying teams will be looking forward to the challenge that lies ahead, writes **Eric Asomugha**



EURO 96

By the time *Al-Ahram Weekly* hits the newsstands, the top two teams from each group in the Euro 96 soccer championship, which will go through to the quarterfinals, should be known. Whatever the outcome, observers are agreed that the early stages of the championship have produced some memorable football.

Two teams have already qualified — Germany and Croatia. Russia, Turkey and Romania are out. The rest of the teams are counting on luck — and skill.

Germany, twice winners — in 1972 and 1980 — were the first

to qualify, defeating the Czech Republic 2-0 and Russia 3-0. The Germans, known for their agility and toughness on the pitch, kept their cool in the match against Russia. They allowed the Russians, who lack good finishers, pretty free access to the penalty area, especially during the first half. The Germans also seemed to be taking care with their tactics, perhaps wary of the strictness of the referees. Germany lost a key defender to injury during their match with the Czechs; it seems they were unwilling to risk any red cards in this match.

Meanwhile, Croatia, whose 1-0 win performance over Turkey was below expectations, woke from slumber to thrash defending champions Denmark 3-0. The new nation of Croatia took their opponents by storm and shredded their defence, which resulted in the collapse of the Danish game pattern. Davor Suker, who scored two of the match's three goals, proved to be

a real danger. Bulgaria, parading a similar squad to their 1994 World Cup team, including hitman Hristo Stoichkov, are fighting to improve on their 1968 performance, the only time they have reached the quarterfinals. The Bulgarians drew 1-1 with Spain and defeated Romania 1-0. Should Bulgaria overcome France, they will have proved themselves as a side to be taken seriously in the future. Coach Aimé Jacquet of France, who dropped Eric Cantona, is relying on new talents, led by Youri Djorkaeff, to produce the much-

needed magic.

Italy's 2-1 loss to the Czech Republic was a big upset for the Italians, putting coach Arrigo Sacchi under attack at home. Mafia Godfather Toto Riina was reported as saying, "Sacchi committed tactical suicide. His selections were suicidal."

Whether or not Italy manage to regain their form and record a win over Germany, their defeat at the hands of the new Czech Republic team will live forever.

## Squash out of the cold

Sometimes, all it takes is one win to put some perspective back into a sport on the national level. Such was the case for squash in Egypt. The country's squash players have never really been absent from the international arena, but as individuals they have distinguished themselves only occasionally. As a team, however, it's a different story. At various competitions over the past few years, they have managed to secure a place as one of the world's top four teams along with Pakistan, Great Britain and Australia. Nonetheless, while victory may not have eluded them, recognition on the national level certainly did.

That is, at least until Ahmed Barada led the Egyptian junior team to victory in the 1993 World Championship. Amid tremendous hoopla and fanfare, the national squash team found itself celebrated as an example of reincarnation — the re-emergence of a power that faded away from the limelight as quickly as it walked into it.

No one really denies that Egypt has traditionally been a strong contender on the international squash arena. However, the formula for success is not comprised solely of talent. This is merely a catalyst for victory. Without money and support, this skill cannot be developed, and the end result is that adept players may simply lose interest and move on. Ahmed Safwat and Abbas Kaoud, the national team's coaches, are cases in point. Before assuming their coaching responsibilities, they were players in their own right. Now residing in England, roughly 20 years ago they were members of the Egyptian national team that took fourth in the 1976 World Championship. In 1977, the team took third in the same

Civilizations rise and fall, the tide ebbs and wanes, and the performance of Egypt's national squash teams has been erratic — but for how long asks **Eman Abdel-Moeti**



Salma Shabana and Maha Zein potential world stars

competition and fourth in 1979. But unable to find the funding and support they needed to continue playing for Egypt, they left for England, relying on coaching jobs to earn money in order to remain on the professional circuit.

The problem that plagued the national squash team during these years was the same one that other national teams in Egypt encountered — federations operating with a low budget but who were more concerned with team results than individual performances. The flaw in this kind of logic is that it ignores a fundamental fact of team sport life: how individual performance and that of the team also increases.

Barada, Ahmed Faizy and Karim El-Mistikawi's victory in 1993 helped push this realisation forward in the minds of officials in the Egyptian Squash Federation (ESF).

"Barada opened the door for talented, aspiring squash players," said Kaoud, Barada's coach.

"And, after the Al-Ahram Squash Championship, Egyptian officials understood now exactly where we stand in relation to the best teams in the world. They are now more than willing to provide the needed support for the game."

Prior to the 1993 World Championship, Egyptian squash pros used to compete abroad at their own expense, or by soliciting sponsors. This was the only way they could stand a chance to improve their world ranking given that the ESF staged only two or three competitions per year.

After 1993, however, ESF officials, dreaming of being able to win the Senior World Cup in the near future, exerted an effort to send both the men's and women's national teams to major international competitions like the British Open and the US Open. Members of the teams now have the opportunity to compete in at least eight tournaments per year. In a related initiative, the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports began en-

couraging sports clubs like the Heliopolis Club to organise international competitions, thereby hopefully attracting the world's best squash pros.

For the women's national team in particular, this was a giant step in the right direction, giving them much-needed international exposure and experience.

"Overseas, I've played with squash stars like Sue Rite and Suzanne Horner, but championships like the Heliopolis International Squash Championships afford me the same chances without incurring the travel expenses," commented Salma Shabana, world-ranked number 33.

Shabana is one of the few women on the team that has had a good deal of international experience. Her knock out the door of opportunity came when she won third place in the Junior World Championship in Sydney in 1995. She then went on to participate in the British Open, emerging as number 28 in the world. A brief hiatus, from September 1995 to June 1996, set her back in the ranks to number 33.

Despite her success, no other member of the women's national team has made it past the second round of the main draw of any international competition. International tournaments in Egypt may give these players the chance they need.

To this end, on the very near horizon is the Junior World Championship which will be held in Egypt from 13-19 July. Out of this competition, that brings together 137 players from 29 countries, Egypt hopes to clinch the Junior's World title for the second time. "With Ahmed Faizy, Karim El-Mistikawi and Amr Shabana competing, we should be able to win the competition," said Ibrahim Amin, president of the ESF.

## Games countdown

WITH ONLY 29 days to go for the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, *Al-Ahram Weekly* kicks off its own series on the Games' final preparations

### The Games at a Glance

**What** Games of the XXVth Olympiad, marking 100 years of Olympic competition.

**When** 17 days; 19 July to 4 August 1996.

**Where** The main events will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, but five other communities in Georgia and another five outside the state will host some of the events.

**Who** The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) is responsible for staging the games. The ACOG is a private, non-profit organisation.

### Delegations

For the first time in Olympic history, every delegation invited by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has accepted, bringing the total number of countries competing to 197.

### Athletes

More than 10,000 athletes will compete for the gold, including nearly 40 per cent more women than in the 1992 Olympics Games — 3,779 women are expected to compete in the 1996 Games compared to 2,708 in 1992.

### Sports

The competition will encompass 26 sports, 31 disciplines, 271 events.

### Medals

1,838 total — 604 gold — will be awarded, excluding additional ones for competition ties.

### Venues

29 competition venues; 29 Olympic arts festival venues; total of 181 venues, including all non-competition venues: command centers, medical facilities, training and warm-up sites, warehouses and hospitality centres.

Edited by Inas Mazhar

## On the sidelines

ITALY coach, Arrigo Sacchi, had no regrets about the controversial changes to his team despite Friday's 2-1 Euro 96 loss to the Czech Republic.

"I would do the same again, whether we had won or lost," he said. Sacchi made five changes in the starting line-up of the team which defeated Russia 2-1 on Tuesday.

ITALIAN team captain Paolo Maldini is to return home for 24 hours after his wife gave birth to a son, Kristian, on Friday.

"I am very happy, but let's not mix this up with today's defeat," Maldini said following Italy's loss to the Czech team.

DUTCH mid-fielder Edgar Davids has been thrown out of the Dutch Euro 96 squad, coach Guus Hiddink confirmed on Friday.

Davids was sent home after criticising Hiddink for dropping him from the starting line-up of a match against Switzerland at Villa Park, Birmingham, on last Thursday.

RUSSIA has lodged protests with UEFA about the quality of refereeing at Euro 96.

Coach Oleg Romansev said on Friday that if referees were not up to scratch they should be "suspended or replaced".

KILTS and Sporrans returned to Wembley for the first time in eight years last Saturday, but the invasion by Scottish soccer fans turned out to be peaceful even though they saw England trounce their team 2-0.

Police made 64 arrests during the day, and reported only sporadic clashes on Saturday night after the European championship match at the British capital's main stadium. Major battles between the ancient rivals appeared to have been averted, partly because large numbers of police had been deployed in Central London. The arrests were fewer than expected and police said they were very pleased by the behavior of the 76,000 fans at the ground.

SPAIN'S Luis Enrique has another chance to leave his mark on Euro 96 and win his second major tournament following his Olympic gold medal in Barcelona in 1992.

The 26-year-old Real Madrid mid-fielder, who has not yet reached his full potential, is sure to remain one Spain's leading players for the next five years.

WHEN Jordi Cruyff scored against Switzerland, it was not only important for the Dutch team, but vital for him.

"My goal was liberating," said the player who is always compared with his famous father. "I needed it for my future, for myself and for the whole situation."

The 22-year-old Dutchman must fancy his chances on Tuesday against England at Wembley. Playing at outside-right, he has the pace to discomfort the aging Stuart Pearce.

## ARCE EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES PROJECT REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### FOR THE MASTER PLAN PRESERVATION & PRESENTATION OF THE DISTRICT OF OLD CAIRO

The Egyptian Antiquities Project (EAP) of the American Research Center in Egypt, Inc. (ARCE) under its USAID Grant No. 263-0000-G-00-3089-00 is soliciting priced proposals from qualified, experienced professional organizations & individuals to prepare the Master Plan: Preservation & Presentation of the District of Old Cairo. Proposals will be competitively evaluated.

Proposals are due in Cairo at the ARCE Egyptian Antiquities Project Offices on or before 1 PM Cairo time on Sept 19, 1996.

Review and selection may take up to two (2) months. Approx 4 (4) additional months are estimated for approval by government authorities before the work can commence. Interested parties may obtain a RFP package from ARCE/EAP from June 15. Send request by mail or fax:

2 Midan Kasr Al-Dubara, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt  
(fax) 202-354-8622 or 30 East 20th Street  
Suite 401, New York NY 10003-131  
(fax) 212-529-6856

Telephone requests in Cairo for the RFP Package may be made to 354-8622.



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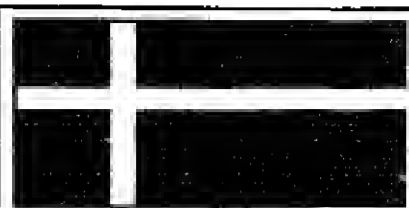
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*Les Arabes face à Israël et face à eux-mêmes*
- ☐ Annulation de la loi sur la presse  
*Les journalistes retrouvent leurs droits*
- ☐ Accord économique  
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Rédacteur en Chef  
Exécutif  
Mohamed Salmawy

Président  
et Rédacteur en Chef  
Ibrahim Nafie



## Special supplement on Denmark to celebrate its National Day



Her Majesty Queen Margaret II of Denmark

The queen of Denmark celebrates her country's National Day every year in June. Denmark — one of the Northern European countries and one of the Scandinavian countries — has strong political and economic relations with the Arab world and Egypt in particular.

For that reason Al-Ahram thought of issuing this supplement which demonstrates the good relations between both countries. On this occasion it is our pleasure to thank the Egyptian ambassador in Copenhagen, Taher Khalifa, and the head of the Egyptian Commercial Relations Office in Copenhagen, 'Ala Qanawi, the staff of the Egyptian Embassy and the chamber of commerce and the Egyptian community in Denmark for their cooperation with Al-Ahram in issuing this supplement. We wish them best of luck in the service of our beloved country, Egypt.

Statement by H.E. Mr Poul Nielson, minister for development cooperation of the government of Denmark:

## Denmark strongly supports Egypt's efforts for peace in the Middle East

Let me first express my appreciation to the editors of Al-Ahram for taking this initiative to promote the relations between Denmark and Egypt.

In January this year I had the pleasure of visiting Egypt in my present capacity. I had fruitful and productive discussions with the ministers of electricity and power, environment, finance, and international development cooperation. I also had the opportunity of visiting several development projects which Denmark supports. Among these was the water supply and sanitary drainage project in Edfu which reached the operational stage in November last year. This is the biggest single project undertaken so far by Denmark and Egypt and will benefit approx. 100,000 people in the city of Edfu and a number of surrounding villages by providing

them with safe drinking water and sanitation.

Danish-Egyptian development cooperation began more than 30 years ago in 1965 with a small project to treat children and young people with hearing and speech problems from all over Egypt. Since 1989 Egypt has been one of the 20 priority countries for Danish development assistance. For the period from 1986 to 2000 Denmark expects to make available a total of LE700m, all in grants.

In 1996 there will be important new developments in the cooperation between Egypt and Denmark.

The new country strategy for Egypt will come into force. This aims at concentrating our assistance to Egypt within the sectors of environmental pro-



Poul Nielson

tection, new and renewable energy and energy conservation, and water and sanitation in Upper Egypt.

Upper Egypt will be included in the Danish Private Sector Programme which aims at establishing long-term collabora-

tion between Danish and Egyptian companies. The programme supports start-up activities, studies, training programmes, technical assistance and improvement of occupational safety and health as well as the external environment.

The objectives of our development policy — as an integral part of Danish foreign policy — is the promotion of common security, promotion of democratic government and human rights, creation of economic and social development, strengthening the role of women in the development process and ensuring ecologically sustainable development.

It is our intention that future cooperation between Denmark

and Egypt should evolve into sector programme assistance which entails support to a range of broadly based activities in the sectors which I have mentioned above. We look forward to working even closer together in planning and implementing the new sector programmes.

Let me end by expressing my appreciation for the role of Egypt in the peace process in the Middle East. Egypt has played an important role in trying to solve conflicts in the region and is now an active facilitator in the negotiations between Israel and the PLO concerning the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and the interim agreement which was concluded in Taba in September last year. Denmark fully supports these efforts in the hope that the result will lead to peace in the area.

### Copenhagen: Mohamed Self El-Yazal

### A marked increase in commercial relations between the two countries

Statement by H.E. Mr Sten Liholt, ambassador of Denmark to Egypt:

I should like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Al-Ahram for once again publishing a special supplement on Denmark on the occasion of its Constitution Day, and I am honoured to make a contribution.

Over the years Egyptian-Danish relations have grown in many fields. 1995 saw an increase in our trade relations, which reached a total of LE575m. At present Denmark enjoys a substantial trade surplus, but it is my hope that Egypt's ongoing economic reform process will lead to higher exports, including to Denmark.

Egypt's exports to Denmark consist mainly of fruits and vegetables and of textiles and garments. On the other hand, Danish exports to Egypt is concentrated on 3 product groups. They are foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, as well as machinery. These account for approximately 90 per cent of our exports.

Development cooperation has been a prominent feature in Egyptian-Danish relations for well over a quarter of a century. Originally Denmark provided assistance in the form of soft loans. However, since 1989 all development cooperation between our countries has been on a grant basis. To alleviate Egypt's debt burden Denmark participated in the Paris Club's debt relief arrangement for Egypt in 1991 leading to a 50 per cent debt reduction. And last year in connection with the United Nations Social Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark unilaterally canceled LE225m. of Egypt's outstanding debt to Denmark.

During my stay in Egypt it has been a pleasure for me to see an increasing number of development cooperation projects being launched and completed. I should like to extend my warm thanks and appreciation to the many Egyptians who are involved in these projects and whose commitment and dedication is a major factor in ensuring their success.



H.E. Ambassador Sten Liholt

### Egyptian-Danish relations: continuous interaction and unlimited cooperation

It has been both my pleasure and surprise to know that the roots of Egyptian-Danish relations not only date back to 50 years of diplomatic relations, but that those relations have deep historic roots that extend many centuries into the past.

When I assumed the post of ambassador to Denmark last September, I felt that although I hadn't been in this Scandinavian land but for a few days, I still found a

solid base of strong and deep-rooted relations. This is what I clearly sensed in my first official meeting with Her Majesty Queen Margaret II on the 7 September 1995 when I presented my credentials. These feelings and impressions are the same which paves the path for unlimited cooperation and development prospects between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Denmark.



Taher Khalifa

### Diplomats in Copenhagen

Magda Nasr, minister assigned to the Egyptian Embassy in Copenhagen, graduated from the faculty of economics and political science in 1973. She is married to Egyptian Ambassador Nasr Mahdi. She worked in the department of international economic cooperation in Sudan and North America.



Magda Nasr

Khaled Hisham Dakrui is an under-secretary at the Egyptian Consulate. He graduated from Ain Shams University in 1984. He was an under-secretary in the embassy in Copenhagen in 1985.



Khaled Dakrui

Nafie Osman graduated from the Faculty of Commerce, Cairo University in 1975, before joining the Foreign Ministry in 1976, working in the general finance administration and in the Latin American foreign minister's office. He worked in the Egyptian Embassy in Baghdad from 1985-88. He is currently posted at the Egyptian Embassy in Copenhagen.



Nafie Osman

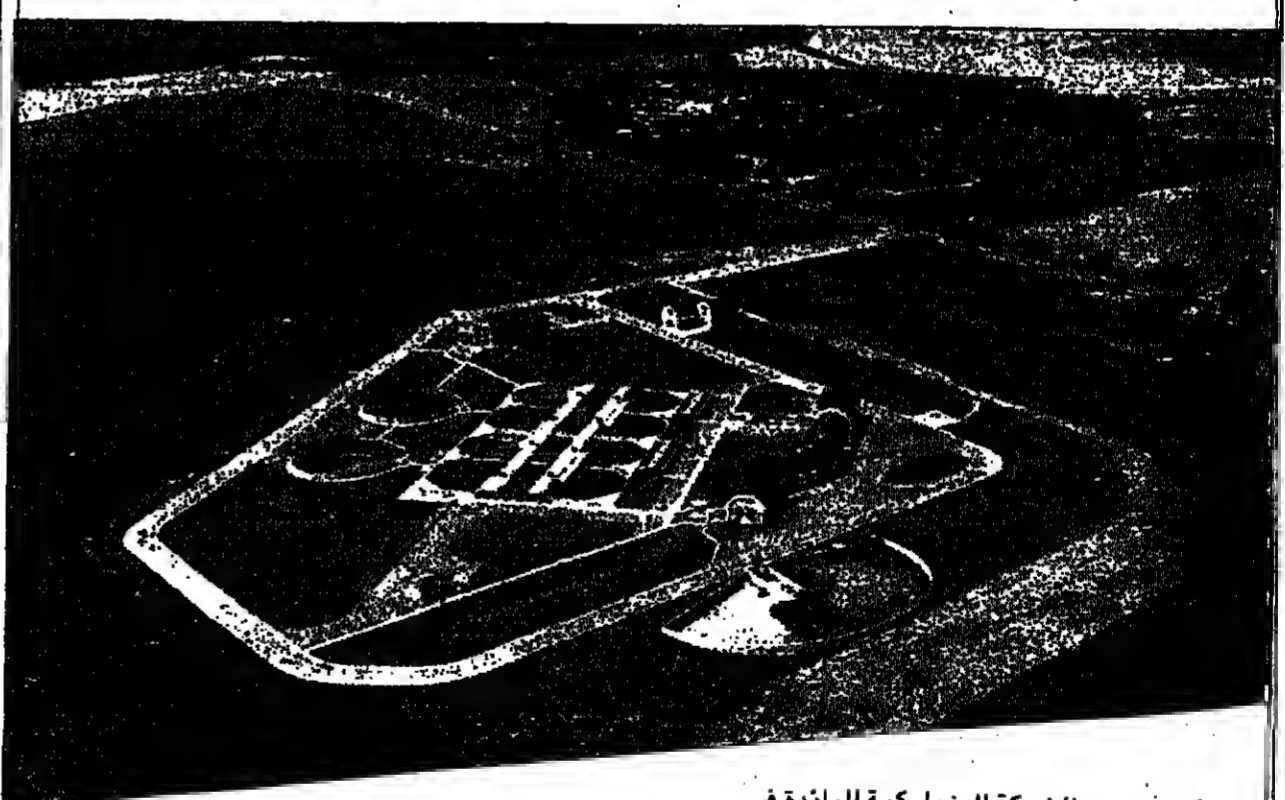
Mustafa Abdel-Azim El-Gindi graduated from the faculty of commerce, and worked for a while in the Egyptian Embassy in Tel Aviv, before taking an embassy post in Copenhagen.



Mustafa Abdel-Azim

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كروجر هي الشركة الدنماركية الرائدة في هندسة البيئة التي تتمتع بخبرة عالمية واسعة في مجالات تنقية وإمداد مياه الشرب، والصرف الصحي، معالجة مياه الصرف الصحي والمخلفات، معالجة القمامة والنفايات الصلبة وكذلك استخدامات الغازات البيولوجية. تقوم مجموعة كروجر من خلال شركاتها المختلفة بخدمات استشارية أو تنفيذ المشروعات كمقاولين، وكذلك تقدم كروجر خدماتها في مجالات التشغيل والصيانة بالإضافة إلى برامج لتدريب الفنيين والعاملين. وتحافظ كروجر على مستواها الفني المرتفع من طريق التطوير المستمر لاساليبها التكنولوجية وانظمتها ومعداتنا. وتزاي كروجر في تصميم معداتنا ان توفر إمكانية تصنيعها محلياً، مما يساعد على نقل التكنولوجيا وكذلك خفض التكلفة.

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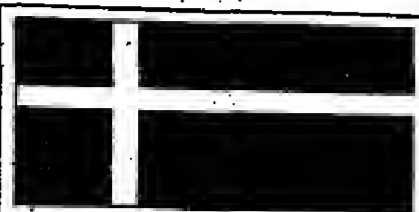
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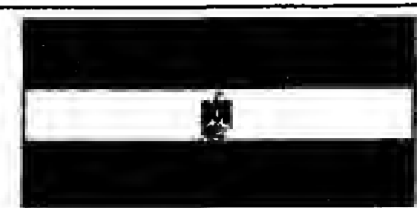
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هكذا من راحل

55 من لاصيل



## Special supplement on Denmark to celebrate its National Day



### Novo Nordisk: The world leader in diabetes care



President Hosni Mubarak

In an interview with Dr. Mahmoud Nabil Abdel-Rehim, country manager of Novo Nordisk in Egypt on the occasion of Denmark National Day, he said: "We've been serving Egyptian diabetics for more than 40 years. Novo Nordisk Egypt always introduces the most recent innovations in the field of diabetes. Some years ago, Novo Nordisk introduced the NovoPen 3, the "insulin pen", which is highly recommended by diabetologists and physicians. Thousands of Egyptian diabetics showed great satisfaction after using NovoPen

3. Our prime objective is to upgrade the awareness and knowledge about diabetes among Egyptian diabetics. Novo Nordisk has established a training and education centre in our office to guide patients on how to use the NovoPen 3 according to physician's instructions. Novo Nordisk participates in symposia, conferences and arranges seminars and teaching courses for the medical community dealing with diabetes in Egypt. Novo Nordisk is determined to keep on being



Ismail Sallam

the best in diabetes care in Egypt under the guidance of Dr. Ismail Sallam, the minister of health and population, and the wise leadership of President Hosni Mubarak.

### Environmental protection, a necessity for the survival of mankind

There is no doubt that a direct link exists between environmental pollution and the spreading of numerous diseases, the likes of which were

not known until recently. The provision of pure potable water is an essential criterion for the survival of mankind and its protection from such dis-

eases. In Egypt, this concern is now reflected in the policies and plans of the authorities concerned, which include the ministries of housing, utilities, new communities, water resources, the Environmental Affairs Agency, as well as the governments. Top priority has been given to water purification, projects protection of water resources, receiving and treating industrial wastewater to be reused in irrigation, along with allocating the funds necessary for implementing these projects.

These efforts conform perfectly with the state's obligations with regard to public health and protection of water resources. Eng. Hassan Nouredine, responsible for the Middle East for the Krüger company adds: "Denmark has been - and still is - a pioneer country with regard to environmental protection and fighting all kinds of pollution, whether on the European or international levels. Krüger is the largest Danish company specialising in the field of potable water treatment and supply, treatment of domestic and industrial wastewater as well as solid waste treatment and biogas plants. Established in 1903, Krüger is also a pioneer within these fields. Eng. Hassan Nouredine joined the company 26 years ago, and is now the area manager for the Middle East. He



Hassan Nouredine

adds: Krüger's activities in Egypt started in 1982, and comprise the design, construction and equipment supply for many projects. These designs are either locally financed such as the project for 55 sewage treatment plants for NOPWASD through the aircraft factory or financed by a Danish grant such as the Edfu water supply and sanitary drainage project.

### Gaber Shueir: an Egyptian success story

Among the success stories of Egyptians who found fame and fortune in Denmark is Gaber Shueir, an enterprising young man who first emigrated to London in 1974, where he studied hotel management. In 1978, he returned to Cairo to work at the Cairo Sheraton, before emigrating to Denmark to work in the hotel field in Copenhagen. Finally, in 1990, he established his own company, Universal Trading Co., specialising in the import of printing equipment in-

cluding offset, paper, film and zinc.

Shueir said that the company exports to a number of different countries, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey, China, Portugal, Poland, and plans to export to other countries in the near future.



Gaber Shueir

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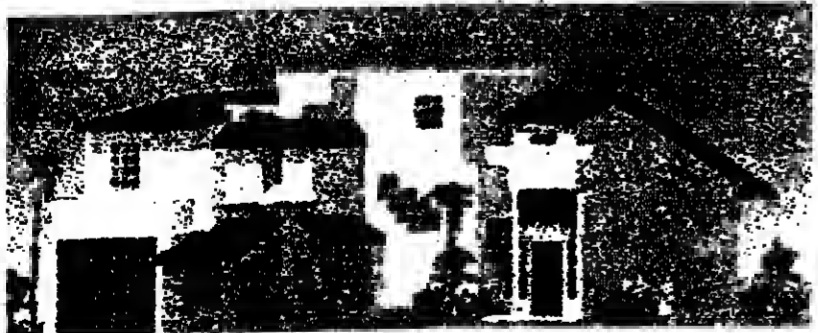
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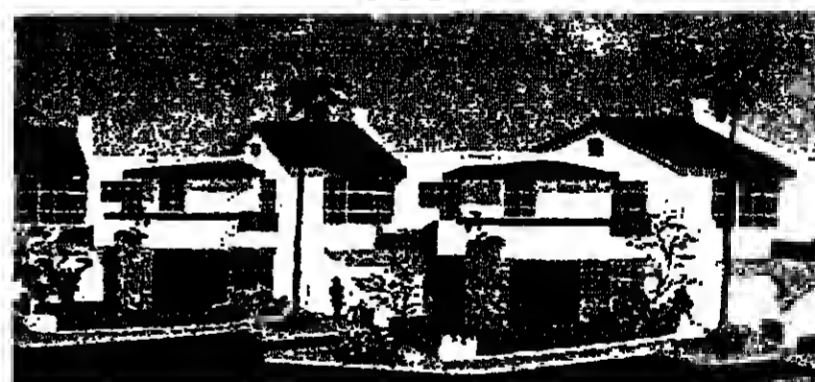
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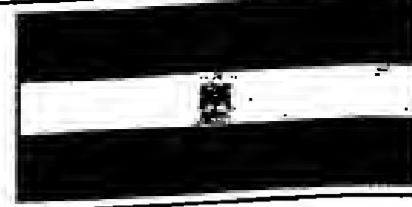
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## Special supplement on Denmark to celebrate its National Day



### B-Light Diet: The delicious and healthy way to lose weight

According to recent studies, scientists have realised that losing weight protects from cardiac diseases and arteriosclerosis as it reduces cholesterol and high blood pressure. B-Light is the ideal meal replacement as it is a complete nutritional programme that makes you get rid of the excess weight thus keeping slim, beautiful and elegant, especially that it contains unsaturated fatty acids, found in vegetable oils, and helps reduce cholesterol levels.



It is known that during regular diets, the problem of vitamin deficiency arises from the reduction of meals. A common misconception is that vitamins increase the body's weight. The only role vitamins play is sustaining the healthy balance of a good metabolism. Since the human body cannot produce vitamins on its own during its physiological organic process, it must have sufficient external sources of vitamins during diets. B-Light contains 13 kinds of vitamins in addition to 14 different kinds of minerals such as calcium, phosphorus and iodine, which is not found in most of our meals, and plays an important role in gout prevention.

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## Economic and commercial relations between Egypt and Denmark

Denmark is considered one of the strongest European economies and is likewise considered to be at the forefront of the Scandinavian, Baltic Sea, and Polish markets.

Denmark witnessed an economic boom in the middle of 1992 and 1994. Denmark realised an increase in its economic growth in total local production reaching 2.6 per cent and continued to increase throughout 1996.

Egypt and Denmark have signed a number of economic and commercial agreements and have organised commercial exchange on the basis of a cooperative agreement between Egypt and the European Economic Union, signed on 9 February 1988. Following this were a number of other protocols involving coal, textiles and cotton, in addition to a special protocol giving exclusive advantages to Egyptian exports.

In the area of economic and technological cooperation which helps bind relations between the two countries, the formation of a cooperative council took place, meeting annually to oversee projects and issue directives for them. The two countries also signed an agreement which prohibits tax increases on capital funds for projects involving cooperation between the two countries.

At the same time, another agreement was signed between the Egyptian Industries Federation and the Danish Industries Federation, calling for the establishment of industrial and technical cooperation. A further agreement resulted in the establishment of the Egyptian-Danish Businessmen Association, with the goal of boosting com-

mercial and investment ties between the two countries.

In the area of commercial exchange, Egyptian exports to Denmark in 1995 reached 77mn krona, mostly in textiles and ready-made clothing (especially T-shirts), produce, leather products and furniture. Egyptian imports from Denmark in the same year reached a value of 900mn krona.

Preparations are currently underway for Egypt to participate in the African Commerce Week Fair, organised by the Danish Chamber of Commerce in Copenhagen. The Danish side is giving reduced rates and discounts to countries involved in the fair to encourage participation.

In the area of economic cooperation, Denmark provided Egypt with loans between 1969 to 1988 at a value of 8.5mn krona, with a 25-year limit.

In 1989, an agreement was signed which provided grants for various projects, including electrical power, environmental protection, and water treatment, to be implemented in Upper Egypt. Likewise, the grant is to go towards agricultural projects.

In 1994, Denmark gave grants valued at 100mn krona to Egypt. As for 1995, it was decided to increase that amount of aid to 190mn krona, following the 5-year plan between the two countries. Furthermore, the Danish government provided a grant to Egypt valued at 200mn krona in 1996,

which will increase to 225mn krona annually from 1997 to 1999.

Paul Nelson, the Danish minister of cooperation and development recently inaugurated a water treatment project in the city of Edfu, funded by the Danish government. The inauguration took place during the minister's visit to Egypt last January. On the other hand, the Danish government absolved Egypt of 370mn krona in loans accrued by Egypt from 1969 to 1986.

In the area of direct investment, the number of cooperative projects between the two countries until 30 June 1995 has reached 13, among

these, one in a free zone with a capital of LE130mn. Investment costs have reached LE304mn. Denmark's share in the capital of the projects is LE81mn, which is 62 per cent. The projects are distributed in the field of industry, service, financing and

Within the framework of efforts exerted to encourage Danish investment in Egypt, research is currently underway studying the possibilities of an agreement to protect investment exchange between the two countries.

It is expected that such an agreement will be signed in the near future. It is hoped that the agreement will strengthen the bridge of cooperation between the two countries and encourage an increase of Danish capital to be invested in Egyptian projects, thus doubling economic and social growth.

### A profile of success



Yasser Rafaat

Yasser Rafaat Hassan is an Egyptian who found success in Denmark. He emigrated in 1992, working in his uncle's restaurant in Copenhagen. He learned Danish in record time, which helped him secure a job at the commercial office of the Egyptian Embassy where he presently works as a secretary. He also provides valuable assistance to a number of Egyptian delegations visiting Denmark.

### A man of the world



Mohamed Kamal

Mohamed Mustafa Kamal has been attached to the Diplomatic Corps since 1979. Kamal ended a 4-year term at the Egyptian Embassy in Copenhagen, which he had been at since 1992, heading the consulate affairs office and witnessing a number of important events in the capital, including: Denmark's heading of the European Union (1993); the International Parliamentary Conference (1994); the World Summit for Social Development (1995). He worked previously at other Egyptian diplomatic missions in New Delhi, India; Brussels, Belgium and Egypt's mission to the European Union.

### Prominent Egyptians in Denmark



Ahmed Asim

Ahmed Asim  
BA in commerce,  
1967.  
Worked in the Ministry  
of Economy before  
emigrating to Denmark  
in 1969 where he  
worked in hotels. Currently  
manager of Almy Import-Export  
Co.



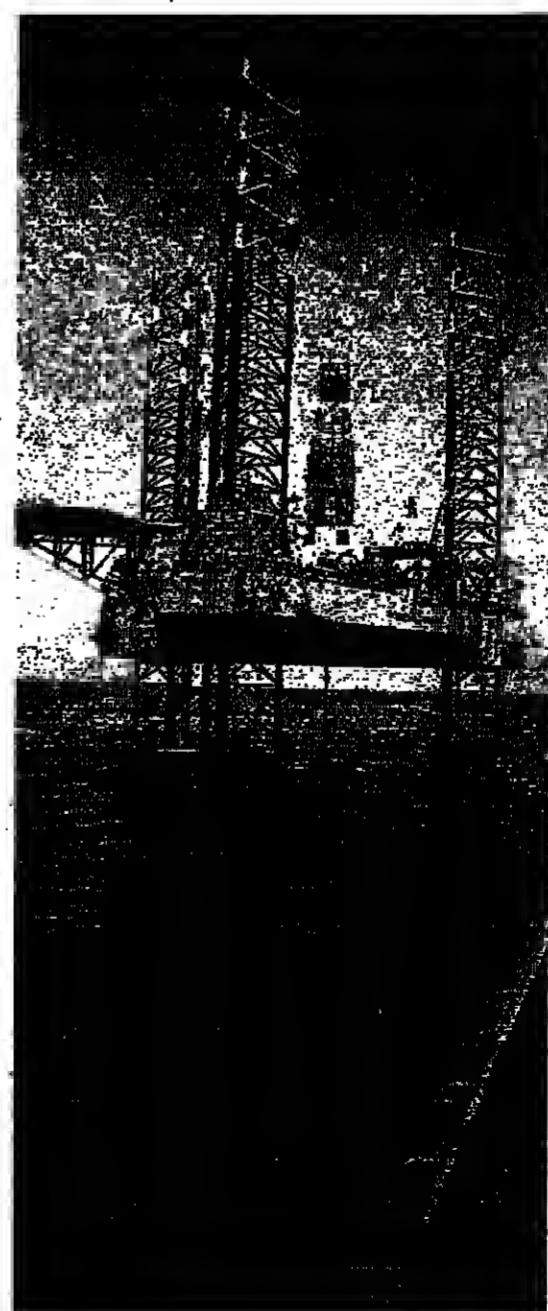
Tarek Rafaat

Tarek Rafaat  
BA in commerce,  
1968. Emigrated to  
Denmark 1978. Played  
for Al-Ahli Club and  
Team Egypt in hand-  
ball. Worked in hotels  
in Denmark. Currently  
works as manager of  
EgyptAir in Co-  
penhagen.



Magdi El-Husseini

Magdi El-Husseini  
Emigrated from Egypt  
in 1973 to study hotel  
management in Den-  
mark. Worked for Sher-  
aton in Denmark, Egypt,  
Riyadh and Luxor.  
Presently works as  
manager in one of the  
largest restaurants and  
banquet halls in Co-  
penhagen, Langlina  
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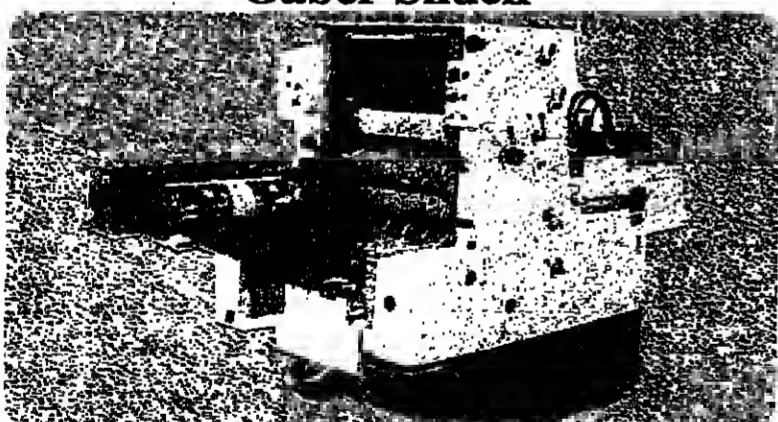
### Universal Trading Co.

DENMARK



الدنمارك

Gaber Shueir



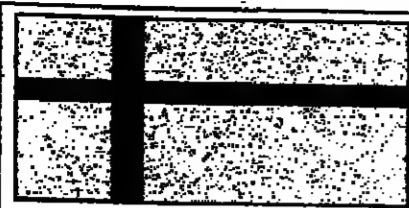
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مركز لبيع



## Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day



Egyptian ambassador to Sweden:

### Sweden's National Day is a remembrance of Sweden's stabilising role

As Sweden comes to celebrate its National Day, we remember the positive and constructive contributions Sweden gave to boost international cooperation in order to secure peace. Sweden's name is therefore connected to

ligions and cultures to the end of bolstering ties among peoples of all races and religions in the same country and among all countries as well. In spite of Sweden's multifaceted cooperation policy, peace



Hamdi Nada  
Egyptian ambassador to Sweden

mainly at the very top of Sweden's concerns. To this end, Sweden assumed a key role since it joined the EU. It took part in the Barcelona conference and also sought to formulate greater EU-Mediterranean cooperation.

When we mention the bilateral Egyptian-Swedish ties, it is worth noting that there are many opportunities for further growth particularly in the field of tourism. In this regard, Egypt has got all of the potential for a tourism boom with all its tourist attractions countrywide. Private ventures can benefit from the increasing commercial exchange which will finally add to the growth of Egyptian-Swedish ties.

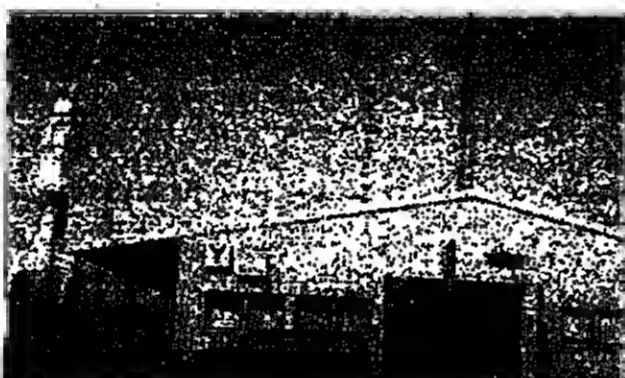


H.E. King Carl Gustav of Sweden and his wife Queen Sylvia

Sweden celebrates its National Day in June each year. Egypt is strengthening its ties with Sweden, which considered one of the most important countries of northern Europe and one of the Scandinavian countries with which Egypt has strong political ties, represented by Sweden's support for Arab rights in all fields. Likewise, Sweden is linked economically to Egypt, represented in its support of Egyptian industry and the national economy. On the occasion of publishing this special supplement, Al-Ahram would like to thank the Egyptian ambassador in Stockholm, Hamdi Nada, and Egyptian trade minister in Stockholm, Ahmed El-Guwili and the Egyptian expatriate community for their assistance in publishing this supplement.

Stockholm: Mohamed Seif El-Yazal

### Expatriate's success sets an example



The company's headquarters in Malmö, Sweden



Eng. Qadri El-Naggar

Arab-Sweden International AB, based in Malmö on the outskirts of Copenhagen, is becoming a bridge between Egypt and Sweden. It offers great opportunity to get acquainted with what both the Egyptian and Swedish markets need and produce.

More than 80 Egyptian businessmen paid regular business visits to Arab-Sweden International AB. The result was an export deal for 26 shipments.

Moreover, 5 major Swedish companies gained access to the Egyptian market where they launched investment projects. Skanska is one such company, currently constructing a giant bridge that connects Sweden to Denmark.

Skanska and Masonit are among the best-known producers of top quality brands. Arab-Sweden International AB acts as a consultant for both companies in Egypt. By virtue of this link with worldwide manufacturers in various areas, Arab-Sweden International AB introduced advanced production lines for beef, different capacity refrigerators, engines, furniture-manufacturing equipment, a hospital and 2 shoe factories. The company also signed a contract to establish one of the largest carbonated water factories, as well as a diaper factory in Egypt.

Together with the Egyptian government, the company is considering opening a new branch in a free zone which will help further aid in assisting interested clients.

The company takes the occasion of this supplement to shed light on the efforts exerted by both the Egyptian ambassador to Sweden, Hamdi Nada, and his Swedish counterpart, Jan Sthal, to enhance Egyptian-Swedish ties.

The company extends its best wishes for the new ambassadors, Mohamed Samih Darar and Kristen Selven.

Qadri El-Naggar, chairman of the company, said that the success of the economic reform programme is what attracted investors and giant companies such as Skanska to invest in the Egyptian market.

### Close cooperation between Egypt and Sweden

I wish to thank Al-Ahram for giving this opportunity to address its readers on the occasion of the Swedish National Day.

The 6 of June has been chosen to be the National Day for several reasons. On 6 June 1523, Gustav Vasa was proclaimed the King of Sweden. On the same date 1809 a new Swedish constitution was proclaimed, the 6 of June has also been celebrated for many years in Sweden as the day of the Swedish flag.

With an area of 450,000km<sup>2</sup>, Sweden is one of the largest countries in Europe. In Sweden nearly 100,000 lakes are connected in a lace-work of waterways, and many large rivers flow from the northwestern mountains through the forests to the sea. A long coastline also contributes to the character of the country—Sweden is located between the Baltic and the North Sea. There are thousands of islands along the jagged coast.

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy, with a parliamentary form of government. The king, since 1973, Carl XVI Gustav, has only ceremonial functions as head of state. Parliament (the Riksdag) consists of one Chamber, whose members are directly elected for simultaneous four-year terms and according to a proportional representation system. Sweden has had universal suffrage since 1921 and the voting age is 18.

The Arabic Republic of Egypt and Sweden are situated rather far from each other geographically and our two peoples have different experiences and traditions. In spite of that there have been lively contacts over the years between our two countries. Egypt and Sweden have deep and excellent long-standing bilateral relations with each other. We have a close cooperation in the United Nations and in other international fora and over the years we have had long-standing and close cooperation also in the cultural field, where I could mention, as an example, the salvage of the Abu Simbel Temple, an operation planned by a Swedish firm. A very well-known personality in Cairo for many decades was the Swedish professor at Cairo University Vivi Täckholm, who has played a great role for the cultural relations between our two countries.

Sweden and Egypt have also long-standing trade relations. Swedish export to Egypt in 1995 according to Swedish statistics, amounted to 1869mn Swedish crowns (LE945mn). Compared to 1994, this represents an increase in current prices by 32 per cent. Egyptian exports to Sweden are also growing.

According to our statistics, it went up from SEK624mn to SEK775mn, an increase by 24 per cent.

I am optimistic about the future development of the trade relations between Egypt and Sweden. The potential of our bilateral trade is quite promising.

Transportation, telecommunications, chemical products, packaging technology, energy conservation and environmental protection, etc., constitute vital areas for business cooperation. Industrial automation is another area where Swedish industry developed a high degree of sophistication.

In this connection, it could be mentioned that the number of Swedish tourists to Egypt has increased during 1995 by almost 20 per cent, which has given more Swedes an opportunity to acquaint themselves with this fascinating country.

Swedish bilateral development assistance to Egypt has mainly taken the form of technical assistance, various feasibility studies and, above all, training. Sweden also participated with a contribution of SEK60mn to the establishment of the Social Fund for Development. The activities in the field of training have often been tailor-made to suit the needs of various organisations and authorities. Furthermore, Egyptians have also been given scholarships and grants in order to participate in international training courses arranged in Sweden.

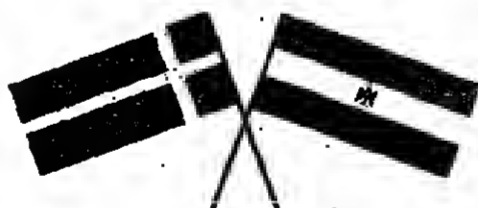
On 1 January 1995, Sweden became a member of the European Union. With Finland and Austria joining on the same date, the EU expanded from 12 to 15 member countries. EU membership has been the dominant political issue in Sweden so far during the 1990s. Sweden's agreement with the EU is one of the most important treaties the country has signed during the 20th century. Sweden, now as a new member of the EU, attaches great importance to the Mediterranean region. We are active participants in the efforts to expand the cooperation through the strategy of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The ongoing Barcelona process constitutes an important political process that Sweden very much welcomes.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to convey to the people of the Arab Republic of Egypt through Al-Ahram my best wishes and at the same time my thanks to all those who contribute to a close friendship, better understanding and extended cooperation between Egypt and Sweden.



Christer Sylvén  
ambassador of Sweden

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Eng Qadri El Naggar

## SWEDISH WOOD TIMBER EXPORT

(Saled El Nawawi)

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and people on the  
National Day of Sweden

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kinds of moderately  
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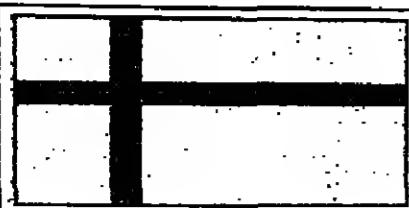
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## Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day



# Largest chemical factory in Upper Egypt



Rifaat El-Sayed, Egyptian businessman



Ibrahim Fawzi (left) talks to Swedish economist of Egyptian origin Rifaat El-Sayed. In centre is Salwa Eid



Some of the sanitary products made from viscose fibre



Research and development of materials

## A perfect example of close Swedish-Egyptian cooperation

It is known that the soaring prices of basic chemicals can be attributed to the technical know-how invested in this industry as well as the costs of advanced equipment used to develop these products. To balance these costs, Egypt seemed a natural choice for Hebi Health Care to establish one of the largest chemical factories in Upper Egypt.

But why Egypt in particular? A feasibility study was carried out, the results of which indicated 3 good reasons:

- The encouraging atmosphere for investment which provides investors with facilities is unprecedented.

- The low cost of power

required for the production of chemicals.

The cost of power nears 50 per cent of the production cost.

- The great potential for using by-products of this industry in agriculture. The by-products are met with great demand, particularly in Egypt.

This is in addition to the traditional factors that contribute to the success of any project, such as Egypt's strategic geographic location and the low cost of manpower.

### Aims of the project:

- To construct an industrial base that will develop the materials required for operating pharmaceutical

factories.

- Producing a fair share of products for export. Hebi Care has many agents worldwide, including Sweden.

- Having an research centre operating at international standards in Egypt. This will help guarantee the protection of patent rights.

Osama Abbas, one of the representatives of the company in Egypt, stated that the latter goal was the reason for the speedy cooperation on the part of all government officials to give approval to the project.

Salwa Eid, one of the company's consultants in Egypt, added that preliminary discussions and consultations with Ismail Sallam, Egyptian health minister, and Gamila

Moussa, under-secretary to the minister, highlighted that the project is of necessity to the local market, which will benefit from the company's products.

It is expected that local components used in the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals will increase to 50 per cent.

As part of its strategy, Hebi Health Care Group acquired the ownership of some companies already operating, and is venturing into joint investments.

The basic principle remains, however, to acquire patent rights of newly-introduced projects.

Hebi Health Care specialises in the area of producing viscose fibres. The company

owns the Nyesfinska factory, an acquisition which gave Hebi Health Care 15 per cent total viscose fibre production in Europe in 1994. 85-95 per cent of its products are directed towards Western Europe.

Hebi Health Care also chose to specialise in the area of producing herbal medicines. The largest herbal medicine factory in Sweden is Novasan which serves as a production plant for its other clients and is entirely owned by Hebi Health Care.

Hebi Health care also owns the Swedlife Co., which operates in the same field.

The company's products are in high demand from health care institutions, hos-

pitals and pharmacies. The company selected Hossam Omar to be the agent of Swedlife Co. in Egypt and the Middle East. Four items produced by Swedlife are being marketed in Egypt:

- Swed Active Man: This gives men over 30 years of age extra energy, and enhances their immune systems.

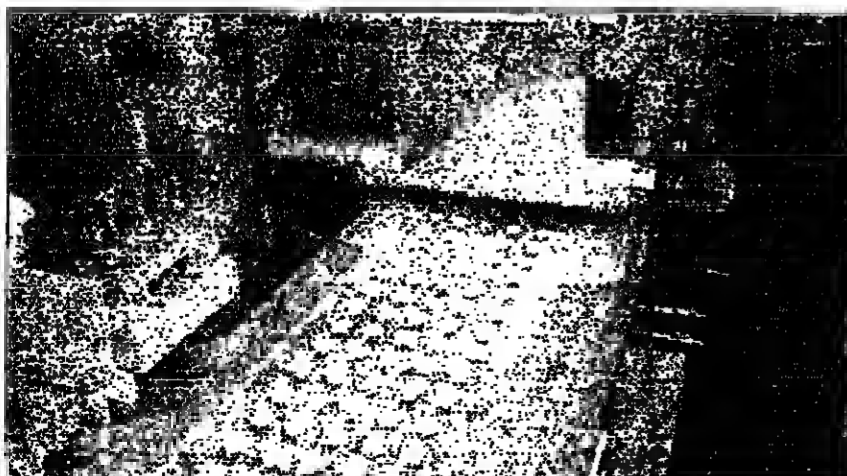
- The Swed Active Woman: For women over 30 years of age, this product adds vitality to the overall performance of their bodies.

- Swed Mint: To alleviate flu symptoms.

- Swed Climatic: A preparation designed to relieve fatigue and produce energy. Carefully prepared and safe to use.

### Agents required in Arab countries

Contact: Hebi Health Care AB Tel: 46-8-21 41 15 Fax: 46-8-21 41 90 Regeringsgatan 20, S-111 53 Stockholm, Sweden. Board of directors located in Stockholm. Representative in Cairo: Orkidia Co, 180 Road 9, Maadi. Tel: 351-3936 Fax: 378-6747



Preparing and packaging pharmaceuticals



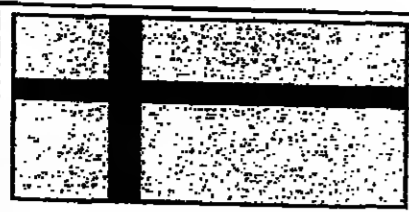
Quality control is one of the company's highest priorities



The Swedlife product line



Karl Gustav



## Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day



### Marosef Import and Export: Earned trust from timber importers in Egypt and North Africa

Imports of Swedish timber from Marosef are known for their excellent quality and enjoy a high reputation among importers. The company continues to open new markets to import its products, gaining the confidence and trust of importers. Among these new markets is Tunisia, which imports 2500m3

through Sogebols Co, one of the largest timber importers in Tunisia. Another Tunisian company which imports wood directly from Marosef is Somaf in Sfax.

As for the Moroccan market, the company has sent imports to Ocld Bois at

Casablanca.

The Egyptian market, however, is one off the largest international markets which imports timber from Scandinavia. The

company has earned its trust from many of the largest timber importers in Egypt, among them Wahba and Sons, Sons of Mursi Nureddine, Hilar's Sons, El-Bayli Co, Mido, the Alexandrian Company for Imports and

Cairo Co. To all of the companies dealing and working with Marosef Import and Export, the company extends its thanks and gratitude.



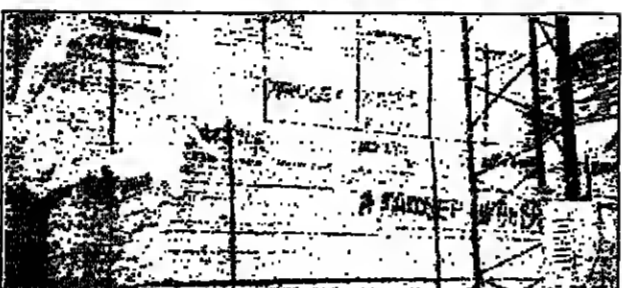
Mohamed Rashad



Timber exports to Sons of Hilar in Alexandria



Wood exported to Sons of Mursi Nureddine



Timber exported to Wahba Co. in Alexandria



Said El-Arawi, owner of Ocld Bois at Casablanca, Morocco; Mohamed Ibrahim Rashad and Sture Petersson, owner of TIB in Sweden



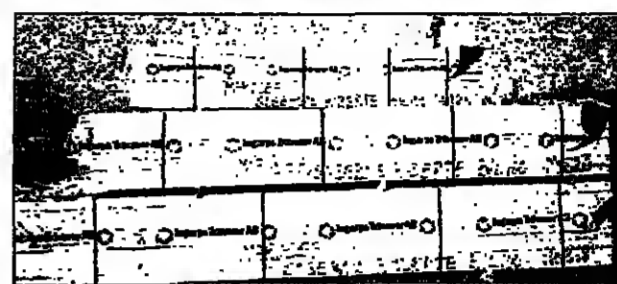
Said El-Arawi, Mohamed Ibrahim Rashad and the general manager of Boo-Hjortkvarn



Ibrahim Hosni, general manager of El-Bayli Co in Alexandria



A shipment of timber to Sogebols Co. in Tunisia



Various timber exported to the port of Nazrat, Tunisia



A shipment of timber exported to Somaf Co. in Sfax, Tunisia

## MAROSEF IMPORT & EXPORT AB

### A Swedish Joint Stock Co.

## Marosef

One of the major Swedish  
Timber Companies in Egypt and  
North Africa, extends heartfelt  
congratulations to the Swedish  
people and government and to:



Mohammed Ibrahim Rashad

With steady  
steps  
**MAROSEF**  
keeps on  
achieving  
success in the  
field of exporting  
Swedish timber  
to Egypt, Tunisia  
and Morocco



Karl Gustav  
King of Sweden



Hosni Mubarak  
President of Egypt



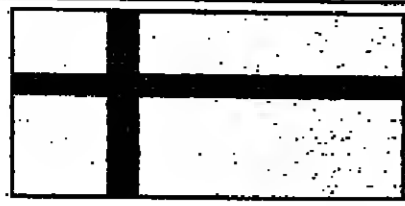
Zein Al Abdin Bin Ali  
President of Tunisia



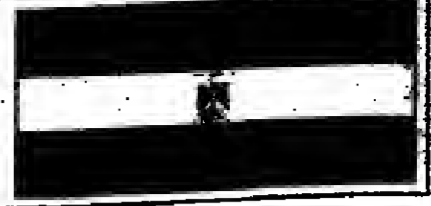
Al Hassan Al Thani  
King of Morocco

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## Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day



### A talk about tourism, youth, and sports with Egypt's Yehia Misbah, a distinguished businessman in Sweden



Yehia Misbah with former Swedish Prime Minister Ingmar Carlsson and international track and field champion Abdel-Moneim Wahba

During my visit to the Swedish capital Stockholm, I was trying to look for distinguished Egyptian people, when I heard the name Yehia Misbah from too many people including the Egyptian ambassador in Sweden and other members of the Egyptian community. Being familiar with Egyptian sports champions, Yehia Misbah rang a bell in my head, and I remembered Egypt's table-tennis champion and captain of Ahl team. Misbah was also a star player at Ain Shams University, and he is an honourable member of the Egyptian Handball Federation. But, in Sweden, he is known to be one of the best Egyptian businessmen in Strömstad, south of Sweden near its border with Norway.

The six hundred kilometers between me in Stockholm and Misbah in the South did not hinder my desire to meet him. In one of the most beautiful resorts in Sweden, I made this interview with him.

When did you start your career and what did you do?

I graduated from Ain Shams University, Faculty of Letters in 1976. I completed my MA in table-tennis training in Sweden in 1971. From 1967 to 1971, I coached the Libyan national table-tennis team. From 1981 to 1986, I traded in electronic appliances in

Sweden. From 1986 to 1996, I started also exporting timber.

What about your marital status?

I'm married to Salma Mabrouk, daughter of the international track and field player Mej. Gen. Ibrahim Mabrouk. All the success I have achieved, I owe to my wife who helped me run my business as efficiently as she runs my house. She is a typical Egyptian wife in her sincerity. I have two daughters, Mona and Noha, both in secondary school.

Being a former Egyptian champion, what do you think of sports in Egypt now?

I was with Abdel-Moneim Wahba during the last World Track and Field Championship in Sweden, and I saw the Egyptian team's excellent organisation. Sweden has star athletes in many sports like tennis, football, swimming and winter sports. Nevertheless, it would not be fair to compare between sports in Egypt and sports in Sweden, although the Swedish were impressed with the Egyptian organisation during the fifth All Africa Games headed by president of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Abdel-Moneim Emara. I would like to praise here the role Abdel-Moneim Wahba played as former president of the Sports

Body and his services to SCYS. As you know, Egypt is making a breakthrough in sports. I should also mention the leading position the Egyptian handball team took in the recent World Championships and the achievements of other teams in different sports with the current Sports Body President Hanafi Abu Teleb's efforts to achieve more.

What is the potential of cooperation between Egypt and the Scandinavian countries?

As you know, Scandinavian people make the best tourists in the world; their long winter and very cold weather drive them out to warmer countries to meet peoples of different cultures. Egypt's diverse culture however, and its warm weather and sandy beaches, are not enough to attract Scandinavian tourists. Tourism is a trade like any other trade where the quality of services affects the rate of tourists. Suitable publicity and good hotel and transportation services will certainly increase the rate of tourists to our country.

I couldn't help noticing the orderliness of the traffic in Sweden. How is that when there are no officers in the streets?

That is an important question. With all due respect for traffic officers in Egypt, I think the main reason Egypt

has traffic problems is lack of awareness and sometimes the disrespect some people have for street signs. As for the Swedish people, either drivers or pedestrians, they all have the awareness that makes them respect the signs without the need for officers on the roads.

What is the best news you received lately?

Without any exaggeration, out of love for my country and the democratic policy in use now, I say that the best news was the safety of President Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia after the attempted assassination attempt against him. That is not my opinion alone, but of the entire Egyptian community here. The worst news we had was the death of Alaa Mabrouk, my brother-in-law, and former world track and field champion.

What are your hopes in the near future?

Frankly, I would like to meet President Hosni Mubarak to convey to him the love, and admiration that the Egyptian community here in Sweden feel for him.

Do you have a word of advice to give to Egyptians who want to travel or emigrate?

I advise them to hold on to their religion, and not to believe the bad rumors that sometimes spread about Egypt.



The Iete Alaa Mabrouk



Salma Mabrouk

### Egyptian exports to Sweden continue to rise

The volume of foreign commerce to Sweden reached SKR869bn in 1994 (\$471.65mn), rising to SKR1025 in 1995 (with SKR567 in exports equalling \$77mn), meaning that the Swedish commercial balance realises a commercial surplus year after year.

As for the Swedish economy in general, in 1995 it realised a growth in its Gross National Product by 3 per cent, which is considered the highest percentage Sweden has realised since 1978 until now.

The increase in commercial and economic ties between Sweden and Egypt continues to bring the two countries closer together year after year, especially with the establishment of the Egyptian-Swedish Cooperative Committee for Economic, Commercial and Technical Development in 1975. Representatives from both countries have met 6 times since its founding, the

last meeting which was held in Stockholm in 1994. Businessmen from both Egypt and Sweden have also been brought closer together by a cooperative council which has convened 3 times until now, the last meeting having been held in Stockholm in 1994.

In the area of economic and technical cooperation between the two countries, Sweden has furnished Egypt with easy-term loans to finance 7 projects with a value of SKR423.5 involving electricity, desalination and housing. Likewise, via the Swedish Investment and Technical Assistance Organisation (BITS), Egypt has been given financing for 9 consultancy projects, with costs reaching SKR116.6mn, in the areas of power, industry, agriculture, managerial development, environmental protection, telecommunications, health and education. Sweden has also offered

training programmes to 403 Egyptian trainees through BITS, at a cost of SKR26mn.

The Swedish Fund for Industrial Development for Developing Countries shared in the capitals of 3 Egyptian-Swedish companies with an amount of SKR5mn, and it likewise contributed to the capitals of 9 investment projects in Egypt with an amount of LE28mn.

In the area of commercial exchange, the value of Egyptian exports continues to increase year after year. The value of Egyptian Exports reached SKR283.5mn (\$37.8mn) in 1993, rising to SKR376.3mn (\$52.3mn) in 1994, which took the form of industrial and mineral ex-

ports. The most important of our non-traditional exports to the Swedish market includes ready-made clothing, textiles, thread, and carpets, in addition to foodstuffs and produce. Since 1994, Egypt has found great success in introducing its oranges, potatoes and onions to the Swedish market, has been met with great approval by consumers.

Sweden is one of the most promising countries in Scandinavia for receiving Egyptian exports, such as ready-made clothing (like medical, military and industrial uniforms), which have become exempt from customs duties after Sweden's inclusion in the European Union, in addition to produce and chemicals.



Ahmed El-Guwelli

### Role of tourism offices in Stockholm

Samia Abdel-Magid, head of the Egyptian Tourism Office in Stockholm, said that the office built after a decision from the Egyptian Tourism Authority which wanted to take an active role in promoting tourism to increase the number of tourists from Scandinavian countries and Finland to Egypt. Egypt is considered an important tourist destination for travellers from these countries, especially in the winter, when Egypt's sunshine comes in contrast to the cold gloomy weather that falls upon these countries in October to April.

The Egyptian Tourism Office is dedicated to the following activities:

1. Placing advertisements in important Scandinavian newspapers and magazines within the range of the office's budget.
2. Participating in tourism exhibitions which take place in these countries. Having a major wing in a tourist exposition is a sure way to promote tourism and attract tourists.
3. Issuing publications from time to time containing the latest information on tourism in Egypt. These are distributed to travel agencies throughout the region.
4. Organising information trips for leading media representatives and personalities as the office's guests. Promotion in this manner goes a long way in attracting other people to visit Egypt.
5. Maintaining connections with other tourism offices in these countries, too inform them of what Egypt has to offer in the way of tourism programmes.
6. Holding tourism seminars in universities and institutes, showing promotional films on Egypt.
7. Publishing an annual report on the office's activities in these different markets. These reports are important sources for facts and figures which are used in promotional materials.



Samia Abdel-Magid

### MALMO MEKANIK KONSULT AB MANAGED BY STIG LINDMARK



Stig Lindmark & Eng. Qadri El Naggar

Collaborator with Arab Sweden International AB since many years in constructing factories and the sale of used production lines to Egypt:

- Cola drinks production line
- Light cement production lines
- Used packaging factories

The company extends its thanks to Dr. Mohammed Safwat El Hussein at the Egyptian Tourist Authority, Dr. Adel El Zaki in Alexandria and Dr. Nour M. Elad for the embracing reception the Co. was given in Egypt.

Tel: 010 29 83 738 - 040 162050 Fax: 040 153636 Sweden

### Allahu Akbar! over the airwaves of Stockholm

Every Friday afternoon over the airwaves of Stockholm comes the call to prayer, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar... from Holy Qur'an Radio in Stockholm, the first — and only — Islamic broadcast to air in Scandinavia. The man behind the call to prayer is Swedish man of Egyptian origin, Wegdi El-Gadawi.

El-Gadawi explained: "In 1990 we were able to secure the necessary funds and licensing to begin broadcasting. The aim of the broadcast is directed at Muslims living in Sweden, whose numbers have reached more than 300 thousand in all parts of the country. This broadcast serves to strengthen ties among the country's Muslims, especially those who are living outside the Islamic world."

"Holy Qur'an Radio broadcasts Friday prayers live from one of the mosques in Stockholm. Programming also deals with a variety of religious educational material, which is a great service in propagating Islam to the Scandinavian region."

"On behalf of myself and of the Muslims here in Sweden, we express our gratitude to the Egyptian Radio and Television Union for their support of our broadcasts and for providing us with material and programming to be conveyed to the Muslims of Sweden. We hope that other Islamic countries will offer their support in the hopes that Islam will spread further in this part of the world."



Wegdi El-Gadawi

### Egyptian success in Sweden

Reham Ahmed El-Guwelli is a student at the German Secondary School in Stockholm, where she has proven herself in science, maths and sociology. For the past two years she has been chosen to represent the school on a number of important occasions and events — the first time a non-German or non-Swedish student has been chosen for such representation.

El-Guwelli ranked at the top of her class, and she is currently preparing to attend university.



Reham El-Guwelli

## H.M Royal ORIENT S.M Timber Exporter Congratulates the government and people of Sweden on Sweden's National Day



Karl Gustav  
King of Sweden



Hosni Mubarak  
President of Egypt

The most outstanding Swedish timber.  
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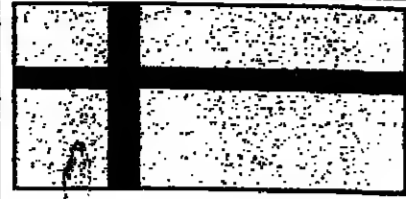
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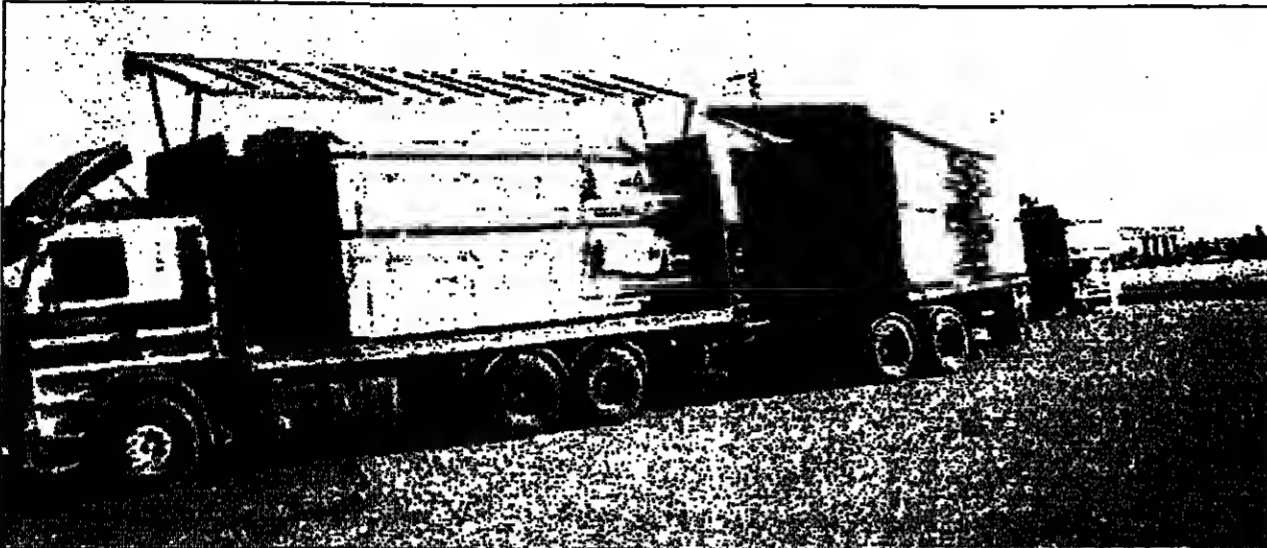
Yehia Mesbah



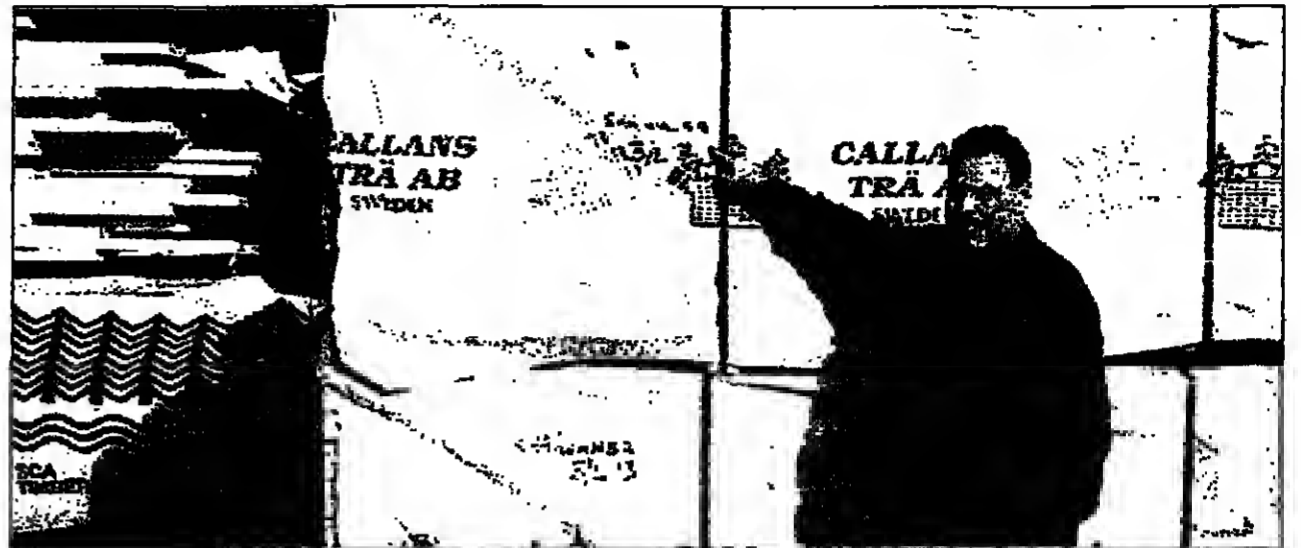
## Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day



# Egyptian expatriates: from rags to riches



Trucks transporting timber to the port

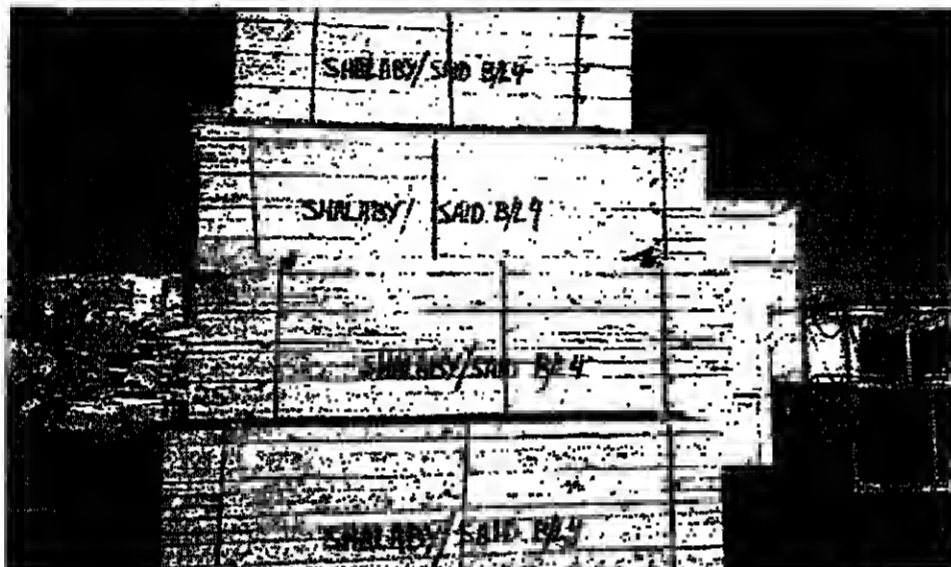


Hamdi Shalabi oversees the loads of timber brought to Swedish ports

### Shalabi Timber Export Co.

Besöksadress  
Medborgarplatsen 3  
Box 40850, 10262  
Stockholm

Tel:  
468 702-1295  
Fax:  
468 702-1293  
Tel (priv):  
468 647-9945  
Mobile:  
070 576-2916



A shipment awaiting to be loaded onto the ship



Hamdi Shalabi with the owner of Knorr Shipping in Sweden

**Shalabi Timber Export Co extends its thanks to the timber merchants for placing their trust in the company.**

**The company congratulates the King and the people of Sweden on the occasion of their National Day.**

Renowned merchant Hamdi Shalabi is a self-made man. He runs a flourishing business in Sweden, has a high reputation and has gained the confidence of all businessmen there.

Shalabi was a boxer when he was 16 years old. He joined the Faculty of Science at Al-Azhar University. During his summer vacation, he travelled to Copenhagen. This was in the 70s, and it was a trip that changed the course of his life. He continued his academic life in Sweden.

As for his career life, he started from scratch. With re-

lentless determination, he entered the field of import/export. Shalabi, now 47 years old, said that when he left Egypt he held on to his principles which made it easier for him to overcome his obstacles. Honesty and adaptability, in addition to his unshakable belief in commitment, were the keys. When he arrived in Sweden in 1971, he worked in a university hospital in Stockholm, where he proved to be efficient. He gained a student work permit that was approved by the Ministry of Labour and the Swedish police. Shalabi realised that his ambition could not be achieved without

learning Swedish, so he divided his time between learning Swedish and work. He studied chemistry, then commerce in the Faculty of Trade at the University of Sweden. Ending his studies in 1981, he worked as an accountant in many cities. Afterwards, he worked in the brokerage field, before opening a private office. After the fall of stock prices in the 80s, he opened a small coffee shop in Stockholm. He became a coffee and tea importer from countries such as Kenya, Brazil, India and Sri Lanka. Today he is one of the largest importers of 225 kinds of tea in all flavours.

Shalabi was one of 9 brothers and sisters to whom he devoted his utmost care. He brought 4 of them to Sweden, two of whom became doctors. His sisters married Egyptian businessmen in Sweden. His brother established a timber export company, but later died in an accident in Stockholm. To honour his brother's memory, Shalabi continues to run his company, currently under expansion. It invests SKR220mn and manufactures 200 thousand m3 of timber. Shalabi owns the Himalaya Co. that imports tea and coffee. Its holdings are worth SKR10mn.

### Egyptian diplomats in Stockholm

**Sherin Saad Allah**  
Undersecretary at the embassy  
Diploma and MA in accounting from  
Duke University, United States of  
America, 1986  
Joined the foreign service in 1989.  
Member of the Diplomat's Association  
in Stockholm.



**Ahmed Hassan Darwish**  
Commissioner at the embassy and  
supervisor of the consular section  
Licence in literature, Cairo University,  
1979  
Joined the foreign service 1990  
Worked in the Eastern European  
Affairs Section, the office of the foreign  
minister, and was part of the  
Egyptian mission to the United Nations.



### The Egyptian community in Sweden

— Nearly 3,000 Egyptians in Sweden work as doctors, engineers, etc. in different fields and sectors.

— Most of them have Swedish nationality and enjoy full benefits from it, such as social security and health care benefits.

— One of the biggest problems facing the Egyptian community in Sweden deals with their legal status.

— Egyptians in the process of acquiring Swedish nationality must obtain permission from the Egyptian Embassy to do so.

— A large number take an active part in Swedish politics and join political parties.

### Alfa Laval Agri-Egypt

Alfa Laval Agri-Egypt been marketing Swedish dairy production equipment of the highest quality within all parts of Egypt for some time, and has recently witnessed an increased demand for its milking equipment and spare parts, which follow the highest standards of quality.

The company has a branch in Minya to serve Upper Egypt. In addition to a fleet of service cars which are ready to deliver and install spare parts to farms across the country, bringing the newest and latest in equipment for milk production.

In its role as one of company's branches around the world, Alfa Laval Agri-Egypt works for the sake of improving milk production by providing the necessary means to do under the supervision and guidance of specially-trained engineers working in this field.

### Success in Sweden



International cello player  
Nagi El-Habashi

### Struggling from war to peace: El-Suwidiya for Timber Export

Said El-Nawawi is a former member of Egypt's armed forces who fought in the October 1973 War. He continued his military career until 1990, when he emigrated to Sweden, and began his peaceful struggle, working in the field of contracting, until he



moved to the field of timber export, where he found great success. Making use of the discipline he learned from his military training, El-Nawawi established El-Suwidiya for Timber Export, providing the Egyptian and Arab market with their needs in timber.



### A Message To Egypt's Milk Producers

Alfa Laval Agri is the world's largest supplier of milk production systems, milking, feeding, cooling, milk processing, management, cow handling, energy recovery and manure handling. Our product program also includes a wide range of farm supply products, detergents, liners, electric fencing, water program and farm maintenance accessories. More than 1 million milk producers in over 100 countries are served by our extensive number of outlets, shops, sales and service vans, and route trucks.

Our products satisfy the toughest demands for profitable milk production by matching animal physiology, rational technology, environmental standards and hygiene demands to achieve the quality expected by our customers

**Alfa Laval Agri**

Egypt's milk producers global partner

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## The philosophy of Swedish education

Sweden has a population of almost nine million people. About 2 million Swedes are children or teenagers under the ages of 18. All of them go to school. Primary and preparatory schooling is compulsory in Sweden. Teaching methods depend on the age and performance of the child. The early ages of the children's education is a period of character building. The children's personalities are propped up and the principles that will guide the children as they grow up and develop are inculcated early. The educational system in Sweden is also designed to develop the children's personality to the full. It is designed to make them yearn for knowledge and develop an inquisitive personality. The children are encouraged to develop a sociable personality and to excel at sports and develop physically.

The early years are one in which the children learn to speak and express themselves verbally, in writing and by drawing. They are also encouraged to write

stories and to speak in public. They are encouraged to be brave and confident. There is no room for shyness or the fear of facing people. The children learn to be articulate. Teachers encourage children to respect one another, to tolerate different opinions and to learn from their mistakes. They learn to love education and knowledge. There are numerous classes in the early stages of education where the children's many questions are answered. This period between the first and the fifth grade is called the "light teaching phase". It becomes increasingly more complex as the children grow older. The scope of the studies are also deepened.

The most important objective of the education system in Sweden, apart from the scientific dimension, is to give them a chance to be creative from the earliest age possible. The children learn to develop sport skills, musical talent painting, acting, home economics, sewing, carpentry, and other such skills which develop

the children's intellect. For example at the end of the mid-academic year, in December to be precise, a play is staged where all pupils of the class take part. There is no difference between rich and poor, intelligent and slow children — everyone takes part in the play without exception. At the end of the academic year, a similar play is staged where the whole school participates. Group singing is encouraged. About 55 per cent of Swedish schools have swimming classes. But in the new educational plan all schools are to provide compulsory swimming lessons.

But the schools alone do not develop the child's potential. There are special clubs for youngsters. With inexpensive fees all children attend these clubs. There are sporting clubs, which give all children a chance to learn new sports and develop sports skills regardless of the social background or class that they come from. There are music clubs, dancing clubs, and private clubs sponsored and assisted by the state.

As for scientific learning in Sweden, it is almost always accompanied by practical experiments in laboratories that make sure that the experiments are impressed on the children's memory. About 95 per cent of these experiments entail visits to cultural centres and seminars where the children are allowed to ask questions. For example when children start to learn about politics or to study political science they are encouraged to visit the Swedish Parliament and to attend the different parliamentary sessions. They are also encouraged to meet with parliamentarians from the various political parties. The children are encouraged to love, enjoy and appreciate politics. The children are encouraged to learn what is happening in the country and to freely discuss the hottest political topics of the day. They are also encouraged to learn about international issues

end to read Swedish and international papers. They learn at an early stage in their educational career that we live in one world. They also learn history lessons by visiting the various museums. They go on field trips to the relevant museums accompanied by guides and see for themselves how the people in the various historical settings lived. From the practical experiences they augment their learning from books. This happens in all other academic subjects whether in the form of scientific experiments in laboratories or in museums.

The Ministry of Culture also plays an important role in staging plays of some of the novels and stories that the students learn at school. These plays are performed around the country in the different provinces so that no student is denied the chance to view these plays.



Azza Abdel-Maqsood

## Gamil Attiya Ibrahim: Keeping the books

He has chosen to exorcise his demons by compiling an accurate, a painstaking, record of his times



When reality is too painful to bear and active rebellion is not in order, a form of passive resistance is sometimes developed as a conscious strategy enabling one to cope with life. Gamil Attiya's sensibilities were wounded at a very early age, and he set out on a journey that continues to this day: a journey elsewhere, back there, back then.

Gamil Attiya has been called the bookkeeper of the era, in reference to his literary work, detailing thirty years of Egyptian history. In his trilogy — 1952, 1954 and 1981 — he describes these years of change in great detail, looking at them through the eyes of various members of Egyptian society. He follows his central protagonist, Karamah, the poor son of a water carrier, through the social and political landscape of this turbulent period, dwelling on Karamah's whipping at the hands of a rich landowner (a common occurrence in the pre-revolution countryside) his subsequent marriage to the now impoverished landowner's daughter, and the endless compromises resulting in his ascension to a finally meaningless social prominence.

Karamah could be any young Egyptian from a deprived background, to whom the events of 1952 have suddenly given many exciting opportunities to tear away at the existing social fabric and rise to a position of influence, but who, by 1981, at the time of Sadat's assassination, wakes up to find that he has fallen short of realising his dreams, which he misplaced on the way to the top.

Gamil Attiya's best-known work, like that of Naguib Mahfouz, is a trilogy, "but Mahfouz's trilogy spans several generations because his heroes are central to his work. His interest lies with the characters and their evolution within their social and political reality, whereas in my trilogy the events of the period take precedence over the individuals.

I am only looking at one generation of Egyptians and the various ways in which change, in the aftermath of the revolution and then during the Sadat era, have affected their lives." But the trilogy has failed to put the immediate past out of Gamil's mind, and although, as a political analyst and foreign correspondent based in Switzerland, he often contemplates the future, the sixties and what might have been remain an important preoccupation.

I met Gamil for the first time at the Cairo Atelier, where his brain-child, a documentary film on novelist Bohaa Taher, a writer belonging to the generation of "the angry young men" of the 1960s, was being shown. Gamil is not known as a book-keeper for nothing; his scrupulous documentation covers an era, certainly, but also its intellectuals. The small makeshift theatre was so full of friends who had come to reminisce with the two writers, that only those in the first rows were able to enjoy the screening. Nostalgia permeated the air while the young, who had not lived this magical period, looked on enviously.

A short discussion followed and then Gamil was out, mildly upset at the shortcomings of the soundtrack but overjoyed nevertheless at the strong participation of Egyptian intellectuals. "The sixties," he says, "were the golden era for intellectuals."

It was, perhaps, his own golden era, his generation. Born in Giza in 1937, he came of age in the sixties. *Al-Hidad Yuliku bi'l Asida* ("Mourning Becomes Friends"); *Asila*; *Al-Bahr Laysa bi Mal'an* ("The Sea Does Not Overflow"); *Al-Nuzul ila'l-Bahr* ("Down to the Sea", tr. Frances Lardet, Quartet Books, 1991)... most of his works revolve around the same brief decade, departing for flights into other times, but always returning, reminiscing, remembering.

The day after the screening, I went to his house in Giza to resume our conversation. He lives in a popular area on a quiet street, in a small building which he shares with his extended family, a building he has had constructed according to certain specifications keeping in mind the comfort of his young nephew, who is confined to a wheelchair. He wanted his nephew to have room to move around.

He promises me a vegetarian lunch. "What do you think?" he jokes. "we [Copts] are heirs to a thousand years of vegetarian tradition." The promise is kept, the lunch delicious. It is a joint effort, in which all the females of the family participated. Gamil informs me. We sit with our cups of coffee in his small lounge. The door of the apartment remains open, and young relatives walk in and out. Gamil is familiar with all their activities. It is hard to believe that he actually only comes to Egypt for a few days at a time and that he does not live here now, but in the countryside outside Basel.

"Tell me about the sixties," I urge him. "It was," he says, "a glorious period in Egypt for writers and artists in general. They were not only given a free hand in their production, they were actively encouraged and often subsidised." Books, he remembers, were available cheaply and in great numbers, new ones as well as popular reprints. The great Egyptian writers' works were popularised in editions sold for a few piastres. Excellent translations appeared on the market for the first time, introducing those who had never learned a foreign language to world literature. This period saw a renaissance of theatre and cinema, with productions financially accessible to everyone; "we went to see famous foreign troupes and bought tickets for a few piastres; Egyptians — and not only rich Egyptian — became acquainted with opera, classical music, ballet and world theatre. Our folklore was rehabilitated and new respect and consideration were given to anything creative that touched the arts."

Artists, he says, enjoyed a great deal of freedom. This is when his group started their famous magazine, *Gallery 68*, of which Gamil was managing editor, and although it appeared soon after the 1967 war, there was practically no censorship exercised on their articles. "Most of us endorsed Abdel-Nasser's policies but our group always chose to operate on the margins of the regime, shunning official apparatuses," says Gamil. According to him, only those Egyptian intellectuals who dabbled in politics had unpleasant encounters with the authorities.

"That is not to say that intellectuals were favoured by the regime," he comments. "The powers that be were wary of us." Intellectuals who exhibited independent tendencies were kept at a safe distance, mostly under discreet surveillance, reminded from time to time that some boundaries were dangerous to cross, but Gamil never had serious problems. Politics do not interest him. They require powers that he lacks, he says, in particular where covert activities are concerned. "I cannot keep a secret," he confesses. "Whatever I know, I tell." He is at home with history and literature, not action.

*Down to the Sea* is, in a way, Gamil's story. The main protagonist lives through the key years, the numbers arranged like codes across the pages: 1952, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1977... A revolution, and a visit to Jerusalem. Of Sayed, the central character — and probably of Gamil — Lardet writes: "It seems now for him and others that the revolutionary dream will never be realised; and in its place, he sees a society which is corrupted and whose people have let themselves be betrayed."

As the end of the decade approached — the other decade, not the golden one — Gamil listened to rumours of impending disaster while smoking his *shisha* in his favourite *gahwa* (or *gahwa*, in his rich Sa'idi accent), Zahret Al-Bustan. This is when he decided that he could no longer live in Egypt.

He left Egypt in the last years of the '70s. His wife, whom he had met in Spain in 1962, was Swiss. Switzerland, therefore, seemed a logical place to settle. Living outside Egypt, however, did not bring the relief Gamil had expected. There was to be no "going down to the sea" twice. He discovered that it was not easy to be transplanted. Free to think and write as he pleased, he did not thrive. The Swiss landscape spoke of death, he felt. He went into severe depression for three years. The charming little front garden seemed a cemetery. But professional opportunities were presenting themselves and Gamil slowly became accustomed to the modern comforts he could now enjoy.

Exile is everywhere. There, he yearns for Cairo. Here, he longs for the past. The exile is not voluntary, nor is it forced. Not once, not twice, but again and again, he goes down to the sea — the sea stretching out before us. The sea of Cairo. The sea of the cemetery. This is the real sea... A strange, mad world, full of good people." He has found a compromise: living abroad, he can write about Egypt and consign to paper his observations and impressions of a recent past, which becomes even more alive, within him, than when he strolls its wild and crowded streets.

Profile by Fayza Hassan



My dearest love, Lady Diana Urbass, princess of the USA. Wish you the best and happy birthday. From Frank, Cairo, Egypt.

## Pack of cards

by Madame Sosostri

♦ My good friend Director of AUC's Adham Centre for Television Journalism Abdullah Schleifer recently told me over lunch that he was considering recommending that State Information Service Chairman Nabil Osman be awarded an

honorary faculty position as associate of the centre in recognition of his major contribution to journalism in Egypt. And it seems that he did, after all, because last week Osman was handed a letter of appointment on behalf of the university from Senior Vice-President and Provost Andrew Kerek at a luncheon, hosted by Schleifer himself, held in Osman's honour. I was there, of course, and with me to congratulate the former Director of the Cairo International Press Centre were fellow associates director of Nile TV Hassan Hamed, Director of Video Cairo Mohamed Gohar and senior associate and member of the board of trustees of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union, Hussein Amin.

♦ One could say that Mahmoud El-Gohary's long career has almost been as exciting as mine. Almost, but not quite. After the 1952 Revolution, he became the head of the committee for the stock-taking of the Royal palaces and consequently produced what is probably the only documented book on these palaces. The first in Egypt to receive a Ph.D. in public relations, El-Gohary established the country's first institute of public relations, as well as the International Academy of Public Relations. Having conquered that field — he is currently regional representative of the International Public Relations Association — he decided to broaden his horizons and dedicate time and energy to environmental issues. And, it seems, with much success, because he was recently honoured by *Hab El-Khad* (Green Party) for his work on the environment. No small occasion this, the ceremony held in his honour was attended by various noted personalities, including Head of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency Salah Hafez.

♦ Last week I was to be found living it up at a reception, hosted by Ambassador Francesco Aloisi De Lardere, in the Italian Embassy in celebration of the country's national day. That night, along with Arab and foreign ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, businessmen and members of the Italian community in Egypt, I was given a taste of *la dolce vita* and had an absolutely marvellous time.

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